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E Y E (S U F F O L K)
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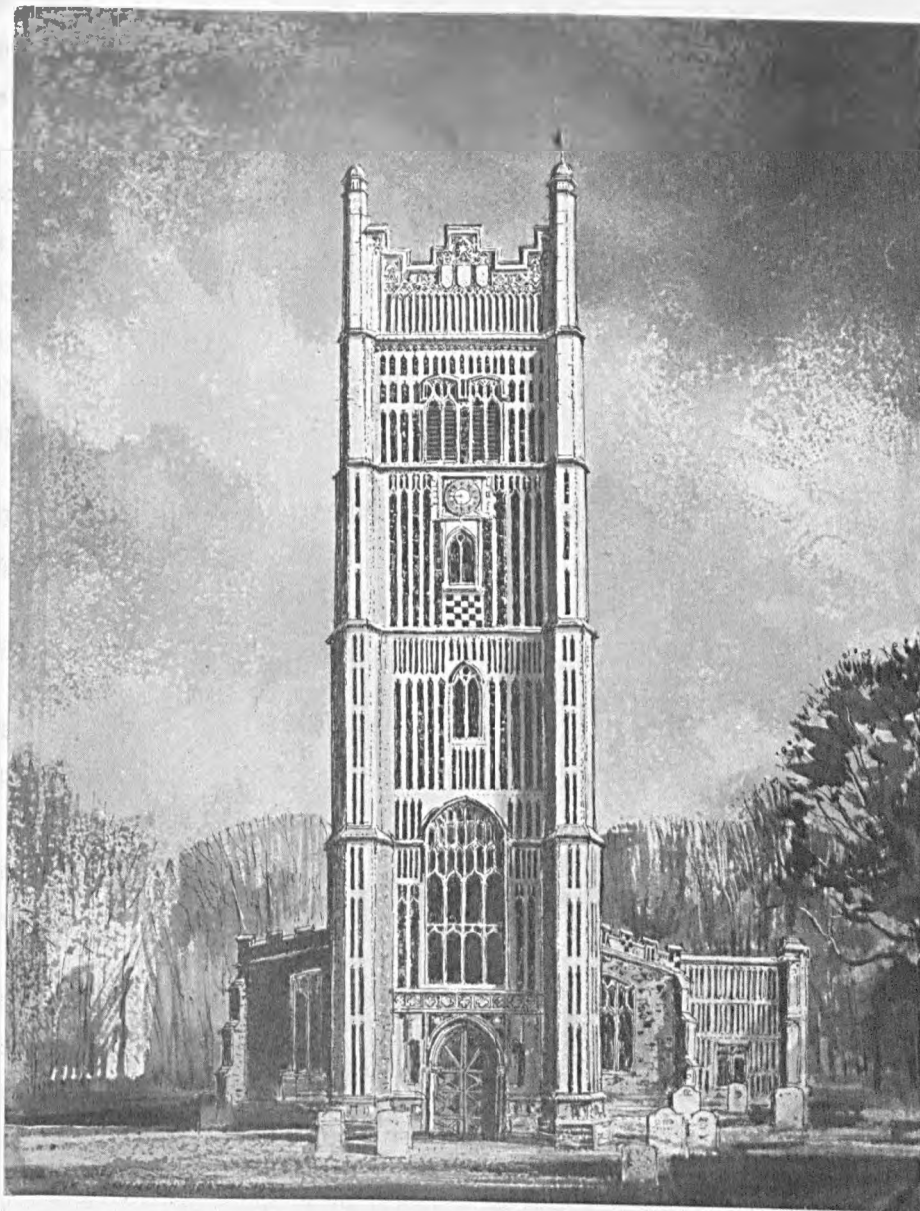
1520-1590

And they are all the names of men once as warm with life as we are at the present moment; they were not mere names in a book; there was a time when they had their hopes and fears, their troubles and trials, their joys and sorrows, their loves and hates ... men of like passions as ourselves, each had his own work to do, each had his own message to deliver, each was a link in that manifold chain which conveyed the electric spark from the early to the present century.

G. M. Maclear, Peeps at Eye in the Olden Times
(a public lecture delivered at Eye Town Hall
on 10th January 1862)

MARGARET A. COOK

Thesis submitted for
the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy, 1981/2



Church of St Peter & St Paul, Eye

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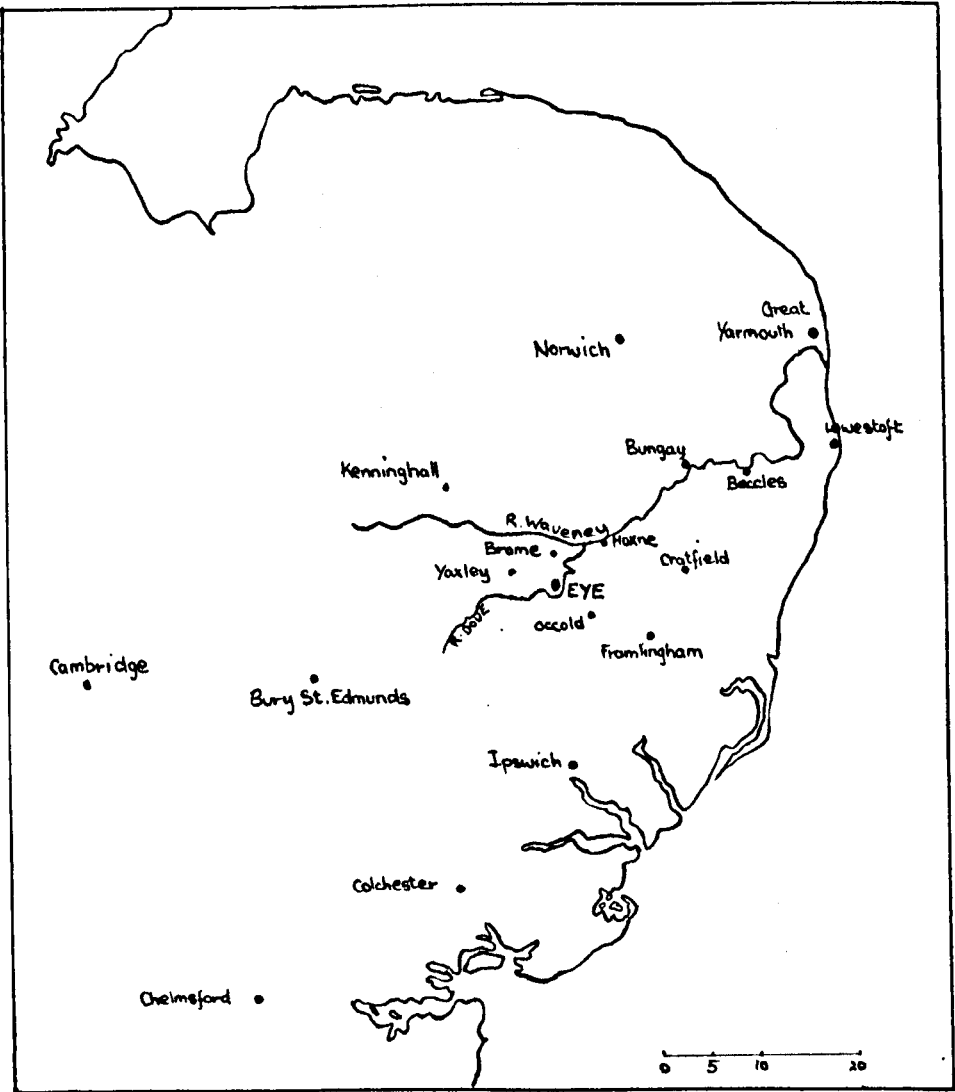
ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the effects of the Reformation at popular level. It sets out to examine the impact of change on one small community and to trace the life of its people during a period of considerable turbulence.

The period covered is approximately 100 years, from the end of the fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth, and the thesis follows the successive movements of the Reformation process beginning with the more static late-mediaeval world just prior to the Reformation, through the years of unrest, to the return of a relative stability in the decades following the Elizabethan settlement. It considers the effect of pre-Reformation heresy on the subsequent history of the town, examines the various threads which constituted the period of upheaval, looks at the inter-relatedness of both spiritual and secular motivation and investigates the attitudes and religious affiliations of certain individuals, families and groups. With the exception of the chapters on the Benedictine Priory and the Grammar School, which, for purposes of clarity, are treated as more or less self-contained units, events are dealt with in a chronological sequence.

While the main focus naturally falls on the religious aspects of change, the thesis is not restricted solely to these as it aims to depict life and events as they were actually experienced by the inhabitants at the time. It is not intended to present an immaculately theoretical work of history but to show with honesty the complexity and contradictions of the evidence, arguing that the picture which emerges, while more confused, is in reality more authentic.

Map showing the position of Eye in East Anglia



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SRO	Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich or Bury)
NCC	Norwich Consistory Court
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
VCH	<u>Victoria County History, Suffolk,</u> Vol I (1911), Vol II (1907)
Suff. Inst. Arch.	<u>Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of</u> <u>Archaeology and Natural History</u>
Cratfield Accounts	<u>Cratfield: A Transcript of the Accounts</u> <u>of the Parish from AD 1490 to AD 1642,</u> <u>with Notes</u> , ed John James Raven (London, 1895)
Bungay Accounts	SRO Ipswich, Churchwardens' Accounts, Bungay St Mary, FC 147/E1/1

INTRODUCTION

When Katherine of Aragon refused to accept the non-existence of her marriage with Henry VIII and the consequent illegitimacy of their daughter Mary, a series of events was set in motion that no-one (least of all that pious Catholic Queen) could possibly have foreseen.

The forces that propelled those events were, of course, deeply diverse in origin but the royal divorce hastened the schism with Rome leaving a void in which those other contributory factors could gather momentum. They unfolded into that process we call the Reformation, but there were, in effect, three distinct reformations: the official or Henrician reformation which established the concept of royal supremacy in the place of papal authority; the theological reformation which began under Henry but did not fully develop until the reign of his son Edward; and the popular reformation.

The official reformation covers the series of statutes enacted between 1529 and 1559, while the theological reformation continued well into the seventeenth century. It is much more difficult to assign limits to the popular reformation since it has no obvious chronological boundaries and by its very nature is not subject to generalisation.

Before 1530, England was a Catholic country containing small knots of Lollard and Lutheran heretics. After the 1580s, the country had accepted a compromise reformed church, a Church of England, from which only a minority of people actively dissociated themselves. In the intervening years - and beyond them in some cases - a considerable degree of uncertainty pervaded English society. For two or three generations, as the pendulum of faith swung backwards and forwards, the people faced an astonishing series of changes, both in their

religious belief and in their religious practices. Their subsequent confusion reveals itself in the theological uncertainty of wills (particularly from the 1520s to the 1570s)⁽¹⁾ as well as in the comments of individuals - like the Warwickshire clergyman who, in 1586, shaved his beard 'upon rumor of a change in Religion'.⁽²⁾

We should not allow the benefits of neatly-packaged historical hindsight to obscure our appreciation of the complex and bewildering realities experienced by those two or three generations of English men and women who endured them.

The Reformation at national and international level is a familiar textbook story. We know much about monarchs, monks and martyrs, but what was happening on the ground in the 9,000 parishes of England? How were the people in the towns and villages affected by these extraordinary and shattering events, silent though for the most part they seem to be?

This study seeks to examine popular reaction to the processes of reform as they related to the small community of Eye in North Suffolk; to look at religious belief and religious practice in the context of the daily life of the parishioners. In historical terms the attempt is tantalisingly difficult because we gain only occasional glimpses into the thoughts and preoccupations of individual men and women and much of the evidence is, therefore, inconclusive.

No region in sixteenth-century England was entirely homogeneous in its religious outlook and many even quite small communities were bitterly divided. But even these divisions cannot be squeezed into the convenient classification of doctrine for personal hostilities or affections at this most local of levels were every bit as significant as adherence to Rome or to the King - and indeed in many cases may well have preceded the striking of a particular theological stance.

Family rivalries, patriotic loyalties, alignments of social groupings, personal avarice, nostalgia for what had passed: all these factors (which in themselves had little to do with theology) tended to blur the doctrinal issues and, alongside those individuals who did feel deeply and genuinely about the religious dilemma, creates a historical tapestry of extraordinary colour and complexity.

That it was not a straightforward battle between Catholics and Protestants hardly needs stating. The variety of individual response, even within the framework of a single creed, ensures that oversimplification has no place in local history. Nevertheless, in order to forestall a slide into total anarchy, some untangling of the labyrinths will be necessary, and therefore the loose designation of 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' will be used where appropriate (although always with inverted commas when intended to denote a broad and non-specific meaning). In such cases, the term 'Catholic' might include those of a conservative disposition who felt threatened by any sort of change: such a traditionalist attitude may not necessarily reflect deeply-held religious convictions even though its outward manifestation might suggest this. Conversely, the term 'Protestant' could refer to those individuals who used the Protestant legislation (with its consequent weakening of the church's position) to further their own ends. There is considerable evidence at Eye of a group of men vitally concerned to extend the powers of the borough and who, by managing local affairs themselves, gradually took over many of the roles traditionally assigned to the clergy. They may or may not have been Protestants in the theological sense, but they were certainly not orthodox Catholics and they seized the opportunities created by the theological climate to enhance secular influence.

The problem of evidence at this level of history is considerable. The gaps are both extensive and frustrating, and sometimes there is

only the crudest indication of an attitude. Early clerical marriage, for instance, might well denote a support for Protestantism (and several ex-monks of Eye Priory took advantage of this new liberty) but, on the other hand, the attractiveness of the married state does not necessarily arise from doctrinal sympathies and the evidence of a married cleric tells us little more than that he did not subscribe to the Catholic view of celibacy. Accusations of heresy from either regime (and there were several in Eye) may or may not signify a larger groundswell of support within the community - such evidence is too frail for building structures of certainty. The ease with which church goods were disposed of could suggest Protestant intolerance of popish artefacts, but it might also indicate genuine financial stringency in the borough and a rather audacious anticipation of government interference: if there is money to spare, would run the argument, then should not the local community benefit from it rather than the monarch? In such a dilemma, an individual's response might well appear to contradict his theological or patriotic loyalties. Declarations of faith in wills are notoriously unreliable for who can tell if such statements of belief embodied conviction or mere convention? And the tetchy remarks of a borough official about certain people and their religious practices could well have their genesis in animosities far removed from the field of doctrine.

Such random glimpses into the life of a community four centuries ago are always incomplete, often disorderly and sometimes apparently contradictory. Any conclusion, therefore, must be extremely tentative. Doctrinaire theorising is hollow when viewed against the complex motivation of the individual response, and the tidy generalisations of scholarship must give way to a more shadowy (if more authentic) reality.

Given all the difficulties of local history, however, it is arguable that the picture which emerges does in many ways compensate for its lack of definition since it can be

a more convincing one than most textbooks give us because it is drawn from the lives of real people whose individuality has not been snuffed out by abstractions. (3)

The starting point for this research was the book entitled 'Z' in the Eye Borough Records.⁽⁴⁾ It is written in two hands which have been subsequently identified as those of Richard Thurkettle and a relation of his, Edward Golding. Richard Thurkettle was the incumbent of Eye during the entire Reformation period from Henry VIII to Elizabeth. Edward Golding was a member of one of the leading local families.

The book is not easy to categorise. It contains evidence compiled from older documents and includes copies of old wills, numerous deeds, surveys of the town lands, letters, memoranda concerning the school, inventories of the church and certain brief comments on current affairs. It takes on variously the nature of a lawyer's notebook, a commonplace book and a personal diary. The chronology is haphazard and is even further confused by the later additions of Edward Golding who, having discovered the book after the vicar's death, added his own comments in an erratic and almost unreadable hand which contrasts so starkly with the obsessively neat style of the vicar.

The picture that emerges of Richard Thurkettle in the 'Z' document is of a quiet, meticulous, educated man, sorrowing deeply for the lost past of Catholicism. He appears to have been an ardent Catholic yet, like most Tudor clergymen, he conformed outwardly to the religious twists and turmoils that beset his ministry. He took a very

close interest in the theological debates of his time and the impression conveyed from his brief comments is a sense of repressed, impotent outrage at what was happening around him. Since he had a tendency to note down only that which displeased him, it is very necessary to read between the lines and, on occasions, his understatements or even silences speak volumes. This was clearly not the book in which he confided his satisfactions.

Edward Golding is the other dominant figure in this study. He came from a family that had been at Eye for generations. He was the great-nephew of Thomas Golding, the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century priest of Eye, and he refers to Richard Thurkettle as his 'uncle'.⁽⁵⁾ Whereas the vicar's concerns in the 'Z' document centre mainly on church affairs, Edward Golding shows more interest in legal matters and there is every indication that he was himself a lawyer by profession.

Edward was a child of the Reformation and his life was contemporaneous with its momentous changes. He was born during the quieter days of Henry VIII (probably during the twenties) when England was still a solidly Catholic country and he died in 1580 when the Elizabethan settlement had endured for over twenty years. His life spanned most of the period of uncertainty.

For a more complete picture of parish life at this time, the historian would naturally turn to the accounts of the churchwardens but unfortunately, in the case of Eye, there is no trace of these documents. They were carefully stored in a chest in the church in the 1560s but have since completely disappeared. They would have been an invaluable source of information, showing how promptly or otherwise Eye complied with the various Tudor statutes, and their loss is incalculable. Where appropriate, the accounts of two other

Suffolk parishes have been used as a limited substitute. Cratfield and Bungay are both within fifteen or twenty miles of Eye and their churchwardens' accounts provide a vivid picture of life at the parish level during this period. Wills are another major source of evidence and nearly two hundred Eye wills for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries have been examined.⁽⁶⁾ (Modern dating will be used throughout.)

This study will try to incorporate all aspects of life in Eye - the trivial as well as the spectacular - in order to give a flavour of the times, although the emphasis will naturally fall on those events relating more directly to the Reformation. Life at the daily level as well as at the national level will form a backdrop to the parochial changes and developments. The evidence is slim, but local history is about hints, hunches and straws in the wind. Here is not the truth, but a possible truth, based on those stained, tantalising, frequently torn, often unreadable and entirely arbitrary fragments of manuscript at the historian's disposal - manuscripts which merely happen to have survived for four hundred years.

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(The idea for the title of this thesis came from Dr. Palliser's article.)
2. Geoffrey Baskerville, Married Clergy and Pensioned Religious in Norwich Diocese 1555, English Historical Review, Vol 48 (1933) 49
3. Roger B. Manning, Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex (Leicester, 1969) xvii
4. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3
5. The relationship between Richard Thurkettle and Edward Golding is not clear. The maiden-name of Edward's mother was Harvie so, although he refers to Richard Thurkettle as his uncle, the relationship was not an immediate one. Edward Golding's great-uncle, Thomas Golding (the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth century vicar of Eye) referred in a letter to his nephew 'Sir Richard', who was in all likelihood Richard Thurkettle. This suggests that Richard Thurkettle was the first cousin of Edward's father, John Golding.
6. There are 184 extant Eye wills from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (See appendix for full list: when referred to in the text the wills will not be referenced separately.)

I am particularly indebted to Peter Northeast for his generosity in allowing me access to his extensive collection of fifteenth-century Suffolk wills in translation.

Chapter 1

THE TOWN OF EYE

The town of Eye grew up at the junction of the River Dove and a tributary in the north-west area of Suffolk, only a few miles from the Norfolk border. It is situated in that region known as High Suffolk which, according to an early seventeenth-century writer, consisted largely of pasture and meadow lands with only enough tillage to supply local requirements.⁽¹⁾

Eye is partially surrounded with water and this is thought to account for the origin of its name: old English, meaning an island or land near water.⁽²⁾ Damp it certainly was. A tenth-century writer described it as sitting in the middle of a marsh, which was confirmed six hundred years later by Leland:

the surrounding neighbourhood is so marshy, and in winter so covered with water, that it is a clear proof that once it was a stagnant marsh. In the former times barges used to come to the town from the port of Cromer, or the bay near Cromer. This is sufficiently evident from the fact that when the monks of Eye clean out their ditches, they find large cables smeared with pitch, nails and bolts of ships, and other things belonging to naval vessels. ... Eye in ancient times had a noble castle near the marshes, of which now only the ruins of the walls are visible in certain places. (3)

In the same century, an Elizabethan writer described Eye as a market town

Of some antiquitie where as yet are sene the ruines of an ancient castle ... (4)

Sir Thomas Cornwallis, of neighbouring Brome, reported in 1557 that Eye was 'a veraye poore and populus town' and other references also suggest that it was overcrowded. The population was probably about 600 in the mid-sixteenth century, but it had probably increased to nearly 900 by the end of the century.⁽⁵⁾ Overcrowding and poverty suggest a rather wretched little place, an impression which is not allayed by later descriptions. A seventeenth-century writer said it

was 'watered on every side with brooks' and that the town itself contained 'the rubbish, ruins, and decayed walls of an old castle'.⁽⁶⁾ In the following century, another writer thought the buildings had recently improved, but added 'from its situation it is dirty'.⁽⁷⁾

Dirty, dank, over-populated, impoverished and dominated by a ruin: the picture is not one of instant charm. But it was that ruin - once a Norman castle - which had stimulated the growth and development of Eye in the first place and which had had such a distinctive influence on its shape. The castle had been built by William Malet, one of the Conqueror's barons. He also founded a weekly market just outside its walls - choosing a Saturday, the same day as the market held at the Bishop of Norwich's nearby manor of Hoxne, which effectively ruined its trade. After the castle had fallen into disuse, a windmill stood on the motte until the early nineteenth century.⁽⁸⁾

With a castle and a market, a settlement gradually developed and a Benedictine Priory, founded in the eleventh century, finally established it. Eye was a busy mediaeval community. The market cross was the central place for transactions and by the fifteenth century it had achieved fame for its style and was being copied elsewhere. In 1462, John Baret of Bury ordered his executors

to make ovyr suyche a were of tymbyr with iiii postys
& a cros as is at Eye, or ellys bettyr, substancyally
& wilkeverid to endure, and no grettere coste than
nedith ... (9)

More than a hundred years later, another market cross replaced the old one at Eye. It cost 3s 10d for timber, 6d for painting and 4d for the removal of the old timbers and it was probably the six-cornered structure described by a later Eye resident who was born in 1813. The town stocks were close to the market cross and, during the course of the sixteenth century, many of the market stalls were converted into more permanent shops.⁽¹⁰⁾ In addition to the weekly

Saturday market, an annual fair also took place at Eye on Whit Mondays which specialised in the sale of cattle.⁽¹¹⁾

Two parks were adjacent to the town - 'le Greate Parke' and 'le Litle Parke', both of which were part of the ancient Honour of Eye.⁽¹²⁾ Eye was the chief town of this Honour and its castle the main stronghold. The six parishes which constituted the Honour were responsible for repairing the palings of the two parks.

Most of the houses of the town appear to have abutted onto the main streets with their gardens and lands stretching behind them.⁽¹³⁾ The majority of inhabitants lived in Church Street, Castle Street or Lambseth Street, but other streets and lanes included Barrett Strete, Mawgdalene Streete, Monke Strete, Marble Strete, Myddle Rowe, Kynggs Strete, Redhoodes Lane, Derneseslowghweye, Durnells way and Holle Lane. The number of bridges in and around the town remind us of its watery situation and included Lambseth Bridge, King's Bridge, Cat Bridge, Middle Bridge and Magdalene Bridge.

That the roads were in a poor condition is evident from the wills. Many testators left money for repair of the roads - for the 'mending of foul ways'. Some gave gifts of wheat or malt for the purpose, but Robert Hardyng was more practical when, in 1470, he left thirty loads of clay for Lambseth Way, King's Street Way, the Priory Way and finally for Spital Way, which led to Magdalene Hospital. Magdalene was a home for the sick poor and was probably situated in Marble Street, adjacent to Lambseth Bridge, although all traces of it have since disappeared.⁽¹⁴⁾

From the late fifteenth century onwards, the town of Eye has been dominated by the huge steeple of the church of St Peter & St Paul, a vast emblem of devotional piety or corporate self-aggrandisement, depending on one's point of view. Many such towers sprang up all over Suffolk in the fifteenth century as a result of the wealth

generated by the cloth industry. The coarse woollen kerseys seem to have been manufactured in the Eye region and, although there were a considerable variety of occupations at Eye, many trades do reveal an association with the cloth industry; especially was there a preponderance of tailors, drapers and glovers.⁽¹⁵⁾

The fortunes of this small community undoubtedly fluctuated, but during the late-fifteenth century it seems to have been a vigorous town with its own priory, school, guilds, poor house, having sufficient wealth to build both a new church tower and a new guildhall and sufficient trade to ensure a flourishing economy.

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2. M. Cynthia Baron, A Study of the Place-names of East Suffolk, unpublished typescript, SRO Ipswich
3. G. F. Maclear, Peeps at Eye in the Olden Times (Eye 1862)
4. ed Diarmaid MacCulloch, The Chorography of Suffolk, Suffolk Records Society, Vol 19 (1976) 26-27
5. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f36

These calculations are based on the number of baptisms in each decade (see W. G. Hoskins, Local History in England (London, 1972) 169.) The figures show an increase in population of 50% over a period of sixty years.

1538-1547	585
1548-1557	639
1558-1567	660
1568-1580	669
1581-1590	894
1591-1600	870

For a more reliable figure, the number of communicants in 1603, as reported by the vicar, was 410: these would, of course, be adults over the age of fourteen. (see Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 11 (1903), The Condition of the Archdeaconries of Suffolk and Sudbury in the year 1603, 23)

6. John Weever, Antient Funeral Monuments of Great-Britain, Ireland, and the Islands adjacent. With the Dissolved Monasteries Therein contained (London, 1767) 498. (Original remarks written in 1631)
7. East Anglian Magazine, Vol 3 (1937-8) 580 (quoting Kirby, Suffolk Traveller, 1732-4)
By the nineteenth century, the town had improved sufficiently for William Cobbett, visiting there in 1830, to describe it as 'a beautiful little place, though an exceedingly rotten borough'. He was particularly impressed by the cheapness of the food. (East Anglian Magazine, Vol 30 (1970-1) 544)
8. Norman Scarfe, Suffolk: A Shell Guide (London, 1960), entry for Eye.
The windmill was probably the one that had been erected by Sir Thomas Cornwallis in 1591 as part of the conditions agreed between him and the burgesses of Eye that the town should relinquish its right of way leading through his park. (SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/2, Book 'C' (The Towne Boke), unnumbered pages. Entry dated 18 September 33 Eliz.)
9. ed Samuel Tymms, Wills & Inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St Edmunds & the Archdeacon of Sudbury, Camden Society (1850) 20

10. The East Anglian or Notes & Queries, New Series, Vol 1
(1885-6) 75
Elfrida Leaf, The History of Eye, Suffolk, 1066-1603,
unpublished typescript, SRO Ipswich, Chapter 5, 20 (1935)
11. East Anglian Magazine, Vol 3 (1937-8) 580
12. Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI, Vol 5, 1547-1553,
(1926) 176
13. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 40
14. Housing for the poor continued on the same site until
the nineteenth century. A note in a nineteenth century
list of Eye charities refers to three cottages in
Magdalene inhabited by the poor and also a hospital
there, all of which had recently been taken down
because they were 'so very ruinous'.
(SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/K/1/15)
15. ed Joan Thirsk, The Agrarian History of England and
Wales, Vol 4, 1500-1640 (Cambridge, 1967) 48

Chapter 2LIFE AND FAITH IN PRE-REFORMATION EYE

... that the said inhabitants and their successors shall annually keep and observe the anniversary of my death on Tuesday in Pentecost for ever ... (1)

The Church of St Peter & St Paul in Eye was first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and, as in most communities of mediaeval England, it became the focus not only of spiritual, but social and even economic life. While worship followed the traditional events and celebrations of the Christian calendar, the people would gather in the churchyard to gossip, play games, exchange ideas and sometimes to trade. (It was in the south porch of the church that most financial transactions took place - charitable donations, payments of debts or tithes, church dues or legacies - and an ancient dole table still exists there today.)⁽²⁾

The Church was the centre of town life, the meeting-place of the people, the very heart of its noisy, daily existence. But it also spoke of times past, of the enduring, unchanging cycle of which the present was merely a continuance. The old building symbolised that union of past and present; stretching back into timelessness its ancient traditions offered security in a world that was unpredictable and uncertain. But if the Church stood solidly for the past and the present, perhaps even more significantly it represented the future too. Its vast interior with altars commemorating the Blessed Virgin, St John, St Anne, St Thomas, its chapels, its statues, its candles, its wall paintings and pictures of doom, were all reminders of the one thing that really mattered: the future life. It was the Church which offered the one sure hope of the hereafter. However dreary experience now might be, all the sorrows of the present world would shortly be absorbed in the glorious light of eternal life.

All people, however humble, were participants in this eternal drama and this is nowhere more obvious than in the confidence with which prayers for the dead were to be said 'for ever'. The future was seen to be as unchanging as the past.

With such an emotional and spiritual investment centred on this one place, it is not surprising to find the Church of St Peter & St Paul the focus of innumerable gifts and legacies. Of fifty-seven extant wills for the whole of the fifteenth century, all but one included a bequest of some sort for the Church.⁽³⁾ John Cullyng left twenty marks for marble paving and William Cakyrmoll provided lead for that part of the roof covering the north aisle. William Seman gave a new bell and Agnes Jenews a candlestick for the altar of St Mary. Walter Page could only afford 'a towel' for the altar of St Thomas, while John Kempnam's bid for immortality was his gift of painted altar cloths 'with a remembrance of my name thereupon written'. Baldwin Cratyng, a chaplain, provided a psalter and John Andrew left the princely sum of £8 'for a missal to be bought'.

Another generous legacy came from John Fiske. He was a wealthy man who lived at Diss, just over the border into Norfolk. He had probably been born in Eye since most of his bequests relate to the town, and other members of the Fiske family were still living there when he died. His wish was to be buried in the churchyard at Eye 'next to the cross ther' and, in addition to providing for certain repairs in the church, he gave £10 for two silver candlesticks. (These were almost certainly the candlesticks described forty years later as weighing $13\frac{1}{2}$ ounces and which were used especially for processions.)⁽⁴⁾

John Porter's legacy was also large by the standards of the day. He was a local priest and he instructed his executors to sell his house and with the profits from it found a new chapel within the Church dedicated to St Maria de Populo.

The majority of gifts and legacies (which varied from twenty pence to several pounds and included malt, wheat and sometimes cattle) were for the general repair, improvement and upkeep of the fabric or building of the Church and most testators seemed happy to leave it to the discretion of the churchwardens or the clergy to decide just how their money should be spent. One or two, however, were rather more specific, like Joan Busby:

I wull that the ymage of St Savyor bepoyntyd w^t goold.
I wulle y^t the Medylpane of the Newe candilbenne In which
xalt stand an ymage of our lord bepoynted If it may be
born. I gif to the same church of Eye a canape to bere
over the Holy Sacrament.

The new candlebeam which Joan Busby referred to offered scope for further gifts from parishioners and a few years later Thomas Eyir gave £3 for gilding it, while William Seman provided 'as much money as will gild one pane wholly'.

Candles and tapers were costly items for any church in late-mediaeval England and the common practice of providing a candle ensured that lights would continue to burn before the high altar, the holy sepulchre, the various saints, and those altars belonging to the two town guilds of St Mary and St Peter. The simple gift of a candle provided not only something of use but also acted as a form of temporary memorial to the deceased which meant that such memorials were not solely the prerogative of the better off members of the community. (Although it has to be said that anyone who was in a position to leave anything was, by the standards of the day, relatively privileged. Grinding poverty ensured that most people had nothing to give and so there is no historical record, such as a will, of their poor and invariably brief lot.)

Candles, then, were among the commonest of gifts. The butcher, John Mason, left 4d to each of the 'common lights' - generally referred to by locals as the husbandmen's light and the singlemen's light. His bequest echoed his mother's of twenty years earlier in

which she had given 6d to each of the same lights. Thomas Potell left 12d to the 'hosbandmenys' light and a similar amount to the 'syngyllmen' light. The widow, Joan Busby, who has already been referred to, gave 12d and 8d to the husbandmen's and singlemen's light respectively, while a few parishioners left gifts of wax or barley or salt to support one of the lights.

Generally speaking, legacies were simple and unostentatious. The people could afford little more. But their wills do reflect the special pride and interest they felt about St Peter's, although such feelings were not always untarnished by self interest. A wary eye must always be kept on one's eventual fate in purgatory and it was part of orthodox belief that those future torments could be alleviated by bequests to the church, gifts to the poor or in other good works. For fifteenth-century parishioners were constantly surrounded by reminders of what would happen to them after death.

Miniature and sculpture, wall-painting and window-glass, pulpit and stage, all in these later Middle Ages ... must have constantly acted and reacted upon each other to produce a most lively sense of the last great episode. (5)

The curve of the chancel arch was a favourite place for providing reminders of the Last Judgment, with the divine judge painted above the apex of the arch, the blessed on his right hand and the damned being led away to hell on his left. The people of Eye were certainly familiar with such scenes for their own chancel arch featured a similar reminder of what would eventually befall them. It was eternity that mattered and the gift of the soul was the first bequest of all wills. Earthly power or wealth or learning counted as nothing in the hereafter and even those who had made their confessions and received absolution had to face the terrors of purgatory and the solemn test of the Last Judgment. In such circumstances, the chief preoccupation of testators was the plight of their souls and their belief in the efficacy of masses and prayers to assist their passage

through purgatory led them to bestow gifts specifically for the 'health' of their souls.

The importance attached to this is emphasised by the proportionate amount of money set aside for such purposes compared with other legacies. Eight marks seems to have been the standard charge for a priest to celebrate mass on behalf of an individual's soul for one year and for many people in Eye this sum represented by far the largest single gift in their wills. John Carwent left eight marks 'to an honest chaplain to celebrate divine office in Eye church for a whole year' and Robert Turnour specially asked that William Moor, a local chaplain, should pray 'for the health of my soul'. John Pope requested that Robert Salews should 'ring and pray in Eye church for a whole year for my soul and all my friends' souls' and ordered his executors to sell his land in Yaxley to supply the necessary eight marks. In contrast, he left 8d to the poor at the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene and 6s 8d towards repair of the church steeple. John Langlond could by no means afford the full amount and offered a mere 13s for prayers for his soul, but it was by far the largest single amount in his will, which also included gifts of 12d to his godsons and 2d each to the poor of Magdalene. Agnes Jenews, a widow, gave the standard eight marks 'to an honest priest to celebrate divine office' which even so contrasts with her unusually generous donation of twenty shillings to the poor. Her daughter Agnes received only 6s 8d. The Jenews seemed particularly concerned about the condition of their souls for fifteen years earlier Agnes's husband had allowed her his messuage in Eye on condition she pay eighty marks over a period of thirty years in masses for him.

The tenor of such wills shows unmistakably that the layman believed the effect of such prayers was enhanced by increasing the number of them or making them more elaborate. On such a premise, of course, the wealthy look set fair for a more promising time in

purgatory and few could have matched Henry VII who ordered ten thousand masses at double the usual rate to be said within three months of his death. However, even in Eye some bequests were relatively spectacular. John Fiske gave several pieces of land and it was intended that the revenues from these would pay for prayers for his soul 'for ever'. Robert Anyell gave not only land but also his stalls in the market-place to the bailiffs and burgesses of the town on the condition that they would pray for his soul every year on the Saturday before Michaelmas.

Those rather less well endowed left a fixed sum to be paid to a priest over a period of years in return for daily masses, which constituted a temporary form of chantry. John Mason, the butcher, could not afford the full set of thirty masses that made up a 'trental' for his wife Katherine, but he did give 5s to a monk of Eye 'to sing half a trentall of St Gregory's'.⁽⁶⁾ Other parishioners joined together in guilds or fraternities which, among other things, acted as a collective insurance society for the soul. The same John Mason gave a bushell of barley to both of the town's guilds and expressed the wish that an honest man would go to the shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham to pray there for his soul.

The two local guilds were the Guild of St Peter & St Paul and the Guild of St Mary and the earliest references to them occur in some of the wills. John Jenews left 6s 8d in 1448 to the Guild of St Peter & St Paul and five years later John Grey gave 3s 4d to the 'Guild of Blessed Mary'. Bequests to the guilds varied from 8d to 13s 4d and there were also legacies in kind, like Robert Turnour's gift of wheat and malt, John Dun's barley or the cattle given by Robert Kendall. Robert Anyell left four bushells of malt and two bushells of wheat to each of the guilds as well as sixteen marks for 'an honest chaplain' to say mass for his soul for two years. References to such a chaplain towards the latter part of the

fifteenth century suggest that the two town guilds were beginning to maintain their own chantry priest who would assist the vicar and augment the number of services. This is confirmed by the will of John Fiske who, in 1488, gave eighty marks to buy land in order to maintain 'a guild priest'.

The guilds were evidently prospering during the latter part of the century and it was probably in the 1480s that the town acquired its own guildhall. This building was adjacent to the Church and is still standing in Eye today. It was endowed by John Upston and is often referred to simply as 'Upston's' in the Borough archives.⁽⁷⁾

The majority of Eye inhabitants, however, could enjoy no such future security for they had nothing to leave and consequently no-one to pray for them. They must simply throw themselves unprotected on the mercy of God. And in some ways such poor people may indeed have been blessed since they were at least saved from the complexity and contradictions of motive which beset their wealthier neighbours. Was it fear or genuine piety when men and women left gifts for devotional and charitable purposes? Mankind is victim to a variety of conflicting motives and it is not for the historian to judge what it is that lies hidden behind the familiar phrases and well-worn formulae of mediaeval wills.

If it would be invincibly cynical to doubt that sincere devotion was a primary and compelling force, it would be blissfully unsuspecting to suppose it was the only one. When men left money for the churches in their wills they were moved by fear as well as fervour, by pride no less than piety. ⁽⁸⁾

Pride - collective pride - was undoubtedly part of the motive when it came to building the new church tower. Wealthy burgesses and successful merchants all over Suffolk lavished their riches on the reconstruction of their parish churches, and towers - like Laxfield, Bungay St Mary and Eye - sprang up all over the county. Built on the grand scale, such edifices could reflect a more secular vanity as a

contemporary preacher, Henry Parker, was quick to point out:

If the making of churches and ornaments and the service in this land were done principally for devotion and for the worship of God: I trow this land passed all other lands in worshipping of God and Holy Church. But I dread me that men do it more for pomp and pride of this world to have a name and worship thereby in the country, or for envy that one town hath against another ... (9)

Henry Parker may not have been far off the mark had he visited Eye since its great monument to those times is the steeple which was re-built in the 1470s and is undoubtedly one of the biggest and best in the locality. Still standing today, it has been described as one of the 'wonders of Suffolk' and it is so tall (101 feet) that it dwarfs the main body of the church. (10)

By the middle of the fifteenth century the old tower had become very delapidated. Seven wills between 1453 and 1463 refer to its decaying condition and various contributions were made towards its repair. John Grey gave 6s 8d, John Folkys gave 20s and Emma Garerde left gifts of malt and wheat. Margaret Folks was rather more practical: she left twelve carts of 'calyon' for its repair. (11)

Edward Golding's ancestors were much in evidence, with John Golding's bequest of 20s and William Golding's 6s 8d. Such legacies, however, did little to halt the process of decay and by 1469 it had become obvious that it would be necessary to replace the old tower completely. In that year, Robert Turnour gave 16s 8d towards 'the making of the new tower', John Nase gave 20s and John Carwent 40s. Edward Golding, something of a local historian himself, dated the actual start of rebuilding as 1470 when Robert Anyell, John Fiske and William Hobert were churchwardens. But construction was obviously slow and a whole decade later Robert Anyell gave 53s 4d towards 'the making of the tower'. Individual bequests, however, generous, were clearly not sufficient for such a major building task and money had to be raised in other ways. Church ales were a common method of fund-raising and

several of them were held in aid of the tower fund. Edward Golding's description of the communal effort and dedication required in getting the new building off the ground is not without a hint of nostalgia for those good old days of his grandparents and great-grandparents when the people's devotion to their Church was total and unquestioning and the ravages of the Reformation blissfully unsuspected. Although the churchwardens of 1470 received only 17s 2d from their predecessors, he writes, nevertheless during their year of office they succeeded in raising over £40 for the new steeple

gatheryd that yere partly with the plowgh partly with the churchales partly of legacies given that waye but chiefly of the frank & devowte hartes of the people.

They also managed to pay for new bells, although they did find themselves in debt to the Prior of Eye for a large amount of lead

which eyther they borowd of hym to be repaid in lead or ells to pay money for the same at the Sturbridge fayre folowing. Also It aperith they then remayned indebted for all the flynt stone to the worke or for a gret part therof bought of Mr. Hynnyngham. (12)

Despite Edward Golding's idealised view of his forefathers (bred, no doubt, as nostalgia invariably is, from the confusion and change he found all around him as a child of the Reformation) the tower fund must have been considerably enhanced by the de la Pole family who lived at Wingfield, just across the River Dove, as it is their family arms which adorn the new tower. Their arms can also be seen on the porch at the western end of the south aisle which is of the same period. The south-western buttresses also show evidence of the de la Poles and, in addition, commemorate the reign in which all this new building took place, for on them is carved the chained antelope, the badge of Edward IV. (13)

As was to be the case with the Reformation in the next century, all the activity and rebuilding offered a boost to local tradesmen, but even in more normal times the late-mediaeval church was a not inconsiderable employer of labour and Eye in the fifteenth century

seems to have contained a large number of men in the varying degrees of the clerical hierarchy - priests, monks, chaplains, chantry priests, clerks. Some of these came from Eye Priory, the Benedictine foundation on the outskirts of the town, and others would have been involved with the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene or one of the guilds or perhaps scraped a living from the parish church itself. These men included Robert Pryme, Henry Barker, John Frencce, John Alvoriche, Baldwin Cretyng, John Fiske, William Thrower, who were clerks; John Porter, John Arnold, William Turnour, John Landman, John Salter, John Dun, Robert Trust, Richard Payntor, William Boole and William Moore, described as chaplains; William Gale, John Webster, Thomas Marvell, John Sare, Edmund Drury, priests, as well as various monks and one hermit named Thomas Skutt. The name that most often occurs in the records is that of Thomas Hervey. He was vicar for part of the fifteenth century and was evidently a popular and well-liked man. He was described as 'the venerable man Thomas Hervey' by one parishioner and of the wills in the ten-year period between 1463 and 1473 he is named as executor in no less than two-thirds of them.

These clerics had a variety of functions, but among their busiest must have been burial days - a veritable jamboree of praying, ringing and feasting, which also invariably included the distribution of money to the poor who flocked to such occasions in hopes of the penny dole.

Jacques Blondell left very explicit instructions to mark his departure from the world in 1492. He had settled in Eye after a life spent in the service of the great. In his time, he had worked in the royal household of Edward IV and his wife Elizabeth Woodville, as well as for 'that noble queene Margarete somtyme the wyff of kyng herry the vjth'. He had also been in the employment of the Duke of Suffolk 'and of my good lady Dame Alice his wyff'. His will is unusually long

and detailed, leaving instructions for services to be held not only at Eye but also in several other local towns, like Wingfield, Redlingfield and Mellis. He left legacies to support scholars at Cambridge, gifts to the poor of several neighbouring towns, provided for any church within the entire Hundred of Hartismere (of which Eye was part) that 'lacketh any ornament longing to the church to the worship and pleasure of god, as book, chalice or vestment' and, if this were not enough to keep his executors fully occupied, set them an even trickier task searching out debtors imprisoned in Suffolk gaols:

when there is in Bury, or in Ipswich or in any other prison any prisoners true men that lie in prison for nothing but for their fees, that they be relieved and delivered so that they be true men and no thieves.

Jacques Blondell wished to be buried in the Priory of Eye and stipulated on the day of his burial

to have my dirge and mass of requiem sung in the Priory there and if the Prior do the service himself, he to have 3s 4d and every brother of the place, priest, to have 12d and such as be no priest 8d. And for the waste of such torches and tapers as shall burn during the service time 3s 4d to the profit of the church. And for every priest that comes thither and help to sing the service and will say mass of requiem for my soul 6d. And if he say no mass 4d. And for the torch holders, every man 3d.

Concurrent with all this activity at the Priory, a requiem mass was to be held at the Church of St Peter's in Eye.

And the vicar to have 20d if he do the observance of the service and every priest of the same town helping to the same and saying mass of requiem for me 8d. And every clerk 3d and every child helping and singing in the choir 2d. For the torches burning about the hearse and for the tapers during the service time, to the profit of the church, 6s 8d. To the sexten and to them that shall (help) him to ring the bells 8d. To four torch holders about the hearse 12d. For bread, ale and cheese for the poor folk of the parish when the service is done 6s 8d. And to deal every poor man and woman of the same parish 2d, to every child 1d. And to the lazar house at the towns end, every sick body 3d. And if there come any strange poor man of other towns, every man and woman 1d.

There was no set cost for a burial service. Many people left a fixed sum to cover necessary expenses and stipulated that any residue should be given to the poor. From wills of the sixteenth

century it would seem that such amounts varied considerably.

Symonde Seman allowed 13s 4d 'to the preistes & clarkes in the quer & to the Ringers', while Katherine Webbe gave 12d to the priest, 12d to the clerk, 12d each to 'everie one that be ringers' and 12d to the sexton 'for makinge of my grave'. She provided penny dole for the poor and also left two barrells of beer, with bread, to be shared among all those present 'that everie one maye have a peice of bread & drinke'. Thomas Mason was more elaborate and he provided four sheep as well as bread and drink for his burial day. Anne Knapp gave 'thre combes of wheate and halfe a waye of chese' while William Mason left instructions that his executor

shall Cause one shepe and one lambe to be kylled to
make mearie with my frendes at my buriall.

Most testators were content to be buried where it pleased God to call them although one or two were rather more choosy. William Gale wished to be buried 'in the northe parte' of the Priory and Joan Busby's final resting place was to be 'before the ymage of Sent Savyor To which high awter I gif vi^s viii^d'. Roger Veer hoped to be buried on the south side of the churchyard 'next unto my children the which is near unto the chancel door' and Joan Mason to be 'as nigh unto the place whereas my said husband is buried as conveniently may be'. Joan Thrower also wished to be 'nere unto my husbondes Corps' and William Bytteringe to be 'neare unto Anne my weife'. The Goldings, Edward's parents, evidently had no such desire. John Golding expressed a wish to be buried 'next unto the Sepulture of my Father', while eighteen years later his widow, Christian, asked to be 'nexte unto my mother Alyce Harvie'.

It is obvious from the wills of the period that the local poor played a prominent part in funereal activities and a rather grim picture emerges of them flocking to every conceivable burial in the neighbourhood in the hope of a piece of bread, cheese, beer or a penny. The poor and needy certainly stood to benefit from the popular belief

in purgatory and they were specially remembered in a number of wills. (The decline in that belief during the sixteenth century coincided, at least in Eye, with a decline in charitable gifts to the poor.) Of fifty-seven extant wills for Eye during the fifteenth century, more than a quarter included gifts of some description to the poor. Most of them were for the sick poor living at the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene.

'Magdalene' or the 'spital house' as it was known locally had been founded as a leper hospital; the earliest record of it occurs in 1329 when protection was granted to Adam Francis (described as 'master') and to the brethren 'of the leper hospital of St Mary Magdalene without the town of Eye'. And since they were dependent for their subsistence on charity, protection was also granted to their messengers who collected alms on their behalf in various parts of the realm.⁽¹⁴⁾ In the absence of any conclusive evidence of the actual foundation, it is quite likely that the master and brethren lived under the Augustinian rule since Augustinian friars were commonly associated with such projects. (There were seventeen such houses in Suffolk and no fewer than eleven of them were founded for the use of lepers.)⁽¹⁵⁾ Magdalene Chapel is frequently referred to in the Eye records and a seventeenth century lease suggests that this building was actually adjacent to the hospital, which further confirms the likelihood of a religious foundation.

Magdalene is mentioned in the earliest extant Eye will of 1387 when the donor provided a bushel of wheat and a bushel of barley, but most bequests date from the 1460s. John Langlond left 2d to each of the poor living there, John Golding and John Pope 8d to the hospital itself. William Golding gave 1d to each poor person living there, while John Arnald gave 3s 4d to 'each poor leper'. Agnes Jenews, whose legacies were more spectacular than most, left 20s 'to the poor of the Spetyll'.

Robert Anyell, one of the town's major benefactors, concentrated on the ordinary poor of the community rather than those at Magdalene and he left bed clothes 'and other necessities' to 'the most poor and needy in Eye'. However, he clearly felt his soul would reap greater advantages from his more generous bequests to the parish church, the guilds and the borough. Eye's other fifteenth century benefactor, John Fiske, seems to have been more genuinely concerned about the plight of the poor. He left numerous small monetary gifts to the poor of several local towns and villages, including Diss, Brome, Scole, Yaxley, Oakley and Laxfield. To the poor of Eye he gave 3s 4d and he also offered the revenues of a piece of land in Cranley (a hamlet of Eye) to be distributed annually to

29 paupers in Eye on Good Friday, and the said
paupers shall pray for my soul around my tomb.

John Porter, a priest, gave nothing to the poor, unlike another cleric, Robert Trust, whose house in Diss was to be sold and the money raised from it to be distributed among the poor and in works of charity. And the concern that another priest, William Gale, felt about his own soul was also translated into practical benefits. Mass was to be said every Friday

And 10 poore folke to here that masse saying oure ladyes
psalter and yche on of theym to have 1d duryng a yere and
lenger if my goods will stretch ther to.

Mass was also to be sung for him in Gonville Hall, Cambridge, each Friday for two years and five poor folk attending those masses would also receive a penny each.

Thomas Skutt, who described himself as a hermit, left the residue of his unbequeathed goods 'to poer folkes to pray for me' and John Roser gave £10 to be distributed to the poor and in other works of charity 'for the helthe of my Sowle and my frends sowles'. A local weaver, John Manestrye, left it up to his executors to deal with donations to the poor 'as theye shall thinke it mooste meteste and meritorious to my sowle', while Richard Cullyng gave 4d 'to each blind

poor person', 4d to 'each crippled poor person' and 1d to 'all other poor people'. John Langlond, John Golding and John Glover all gave clothing to be shared among the local poor.

Jacques Blondell instructed his hard-pressed executors to take the entire residue of his unbequeathed goods

and look where it may best (be) spent for the pleasure
of god and to the comfort of the most poor and needy
people

and he specially mentioned the bedridden ('not movyng') or those unable to help themselves and with nothing to live on. These were to be relieved with sheets, shirts, smocks and gifts of money. This was another mighty task for his executors since it was to apply not only to Eye but to every other town within the Hundred of Hartismere. And as well as all this, other poor people who were not 'bedrid' were to be relieved 'some with one thing, some with another'. Seven of the most needy of Eye were to receive 1d every Friday.

Symonde Seman's bequests were also considerable by the standards of the day. 33s 4d was to be delivered to the houses of the poor on the day of his burial, 3s 4d on his seventh day and a further 3s 4d on his thirtieth day. He left money to the poor of no less than sixteen neighbouring communities and his 'yeartide' was to be celebrated by distributing bread made from two bushells of wheat.

Very occasionally, the poor had the advantage of legacies that had gone astray. John Woodward's will was typical. He left twenty marks to buy land for the maintenance of a clerk, but if the land was not purchased within seven years then the twenty marks were to go towards the 'nurisshinge of poore people'. There are many examples of this type of bequest in which the poor stood to benefit only if certain conditions were not met: most commonly if the children of the testator did not live long enough to receive their legacies.

Thomas Skutt left ten marks to each of his children John, Edward and Agnes, and five marks to his daughter Beatrice, which they were to

receive at the age of twenty. If any one of them died before reaching that age then his or her share was to be given to the poor. Thomas Parmenter left all his property to be divided between his wife Amy, his children Elizabeth and Robert and the child that his wife was then expecting. In the event of all four dying, the churchwardens of Eye were to sell the property and divide the proceeds into three parts: one for the poor, one for the mending of roads and one for the schoolmaster. It would only be in very rare cases that such bequests did actually reach the poor and certainly in the case of Thomas Parmenter his son Robert lived to the age where he could enter into his father's property.

For rich and poor alike, the Church dominated the little patch of Suffolk soil they all shared. Its bells called them to worship, marked the passing of the Christian year and the personal milestones in each individual life. According to one historian, the whole air of Suffolk during the days of Henry VII 'must have been saturated with the brazen melody of its four hundred belfries'.⁽¹⁶⁾ Most of the bells of Suffolk were cast in the county itself and they had functions other than those relating directly to worship. In fact, many powers were attributed to them. The clangour of the bells would be one of the most dramatic sounds ever heard by people of the time and it is not surprising to find them the focus of ancient superstitions - like the belief that bells had the power to drive out the devil or the ability to disperse storms. (The ringers at one church in 1464 were supplied with bread and drink during 'the great thunderyng' and at Spalding in 1519 there is an account of the payment to the ringers 'for ryngyng when the Tempest was'.)⁽¹⁷⁾

In Eye, Robert Anyell had made a substantial donation towards the new belfry, which was still not complete in 1479, and he also gave a sum of money towards a belfry that was to be built at the Priory. One of the very ancient bells of Eye is the Sacristan or

Angelus bell which is dated 1300 and which, many centuries later, was removed to the clock tower of Eye town hall. (18)

It was also common practice for church bells to be rung whenever a bishop came on visitation and successive Bishops of Norwich were probably no strangers to the people of Eye for, apart from their official visitations to the town, their episcopal manor house was at Hoxne, only three or four miles north-east of Eye. This was a particularly favourite residence of Bishop Nykke. The bells would also be rung on those much rarer occasions when a monarch passed through the parish and, although there is no direct evidence, it is more than likely they announced the arrival of Mary Tudor during those troubled times of 1553 for almost certainly she would have passed through Eye on her way from Kenninghall to Framlingham as she prepared to claim her inheritance.

Bells featured prominently in the many plays, processions and festivals of the mediaeval year and a few colourful glimpses of Eye parish life in these pre-Reformation days as it celebrated the recurring events of the Christian calendar occur through the escapades of Nicholas Canon. He was a fifteenth century Lollard heretic who lived in Eye and he delighted in poking fun at the festivities of the church. The first charge against him concerned the Easter Day procession 'when all the parishioners went about the church of Eye solemnly in procession, as the manner was'. Not so Nicholas. He, in mockery, 'went about the church the contrary way' and met the procession face to face. As a Lollard, he could not accept the orthodox belief in transubstantiation and he seems never to have let slip an opportunity for making his feelings known. On Corpus Christi day, just at the solemn moment of the elevation of high mass

when all the parishioners and other strangers kneeled down, holding up their hands and doing reverence unto the sacrament, the said Nicholas went behind a pillar of the church,

and turning his face from the high altar mocked them that did reverence unto the sacrament.

His mother tried to make him conform and, when he would not cross himself, she took his right hand and made the sign of the cross for him, but he 'deriding his mother's blessing, took up his right hand of his own accord and blessed him otherwise'. The final charge of heresy against him concerned his antics on All Hallows Day when

at the time of the elevation of high mass, when many of the parishioners of Eye lighted many torches, and carried them up to the high altar, kneeling down there in reverence and honour of the sacrament, the said Nicholas, carrying a torch, went up hard to the high altar, and standing behind the priest's back saying mass at the time of the elevation, stood upright upon his feet, turning his back to the priest, and his face towards the people, and would do no reverence unto the sacrament.

Such shocking displays brought Nicholas Canon inevitably before the Bishop of Norwich for judgment who decided he was in error on three charges, guilty of heresy on a further three charges, and he was forced to 'abjure all the said articles'. His penance was

three displings (sic) about the cloister of the cathedral church of Norwich, before a solemn procession, bare-headed and bare-foot, carrying a taper of half a pound in his hand, going after the manner aforesaid, like a mere penitentiary.

Until the time of his penance, Nicholas was to be kept in prison so that he 'should not infect the flock with his venom and poison of errors and heresies'.⁽¹⁹⁾

The festival of Corpus Christi at which Nicholas Canon misbehaved himself was usually marked by processions with flowers and torches and it was common to conclude the celebrations with a feast.⁽²⁰⁾ At Eye, the festivities also included the annual Corpus Christi play. The chamberlains were involved in the organisation of this event and their accounts show the sort of expenditure involved. Some payments were for unspecified work, which may have been providing props or scenery; one entry concerns grass supplied by the churchwardens, but most of their money seems to have been spent on drink for the players.⁽²¹⁾

Other festivities and processions that took place regularly in the town concerned not so much religious events as the remembrance of benefactors. Robert Anyell was typical. He gave a meadow to the town on condition that the people took part in certain ceremonies each year for the benefit of his soul. They were to observe each anniversary of his death on the Monday of Pentecost week.

... the inhabitants of Eye and their successors immediately after my death, shall, after noon on the said Monday, cause a sacrist of the said church or another honest man of the town to walk with a small bell called 'le Sowlebell' around the borough aforesaid, and that the sacrist shall walk around the borough saying a special prayer for my soul and the souls of Robert Anyell, my father, Margaret Anyell, my mother, and all my benefactors as is the custom of the borough. And further, that the same inhabitants and their successors shall after vespers on the said Monday cause the vicar of the town or his deputy or other honest chaplain, with other chaplains and clerics of the town, to sing a placebo and dirge, with lessons, prayers, oblations and observances, for my soul, and the souls of my father and mother, and all my benefactors for ever. And in the morning, namely on Tuesday in Pentecost week, the same vicar or other honest chaplain shall celebrate mass, with prayers, oblations and observances, which same chaplain shall annually celebrate a mass for myself or sing a special prayer for my soul, the souls of my father and mother, and those of all my benefactors for ever. And further, the said inhabitants of Eye or their successors shall, every year cause all the bells in the belfry of the parish church to ring on the said days, namely on the Monday and Tuesday aforesaid, and to cause a placebo and dirge to be sung.

Eleven years later, John Fiske left an almost identical will. In return for his gift to the town of two meadows and a close, the people were to observe the anniversary of his death on the Tuesday in Pentecost week - the day following the ceremonies of Robert Anyell. Once again, the sacristan was to walk around the borough ringing the small soul bell and praying for John Fiske's soul at certain parts of the town 'as is the ancient custom'. Lessons and prayers were to be said on the following Wednesday morning; a requiem mass was to be celebrated during which the chaplain was to sing a special prayer before the Evangelus. All the bells in the tower were to be rung on both days 'especially at the time of the singing of the placebo and dirge as is the custom'.

This phrase 'as is the custom' implies a considerable amount of processing, praying, singing and ringing through the town and all this would be in addition to the regular cycle of Christian festivals at Christmas and Easter, on Palm Sunday, Ascensiontide, Whitsuntide, the Vigil of St John the Baptist, at Midsummer, at Hocktide, Corpus Christi or Epiphany.

The Church stood at the centre of all this activity and just occasionally it represented a more desperate sanctuary, as in 1518 when 5s 8d was paid to the men who 'whatched the person that tuke the cherche for saf gard of his lyff'.⁽²²⁾

And if religion slid imperceptibly into pagan practices, then all that too was part of the whole scene. Sorcery was not unknown in Eye and Nan Barrett and Margery Jourdain were both said to be witches.⁽²³⁾ Indeed there was a legend that

The witch of Eye received answers from her Spirit, that the Duke of Suffolke should take heed of water: which the Queene forewarned him of, as remembering the Witches Prophetie, which afterward came to pass. ⁽²⁴⁾

If Queen Margaret really did pass on such a prophecy to William de la Pole then it was clearly to no avail. And Margery Jourdain was condemned to death and burned at Smithfield in 1440 'for practising the king's death by an image of wax'.⁽²⁵⁾

The occult was merely the other side of the coin of mediaeval religion which was colourful and reassuring in its recurring rituals. 'As is the custom' and 'for ever' are two of the most frequent phrases found in Eye wills and show clearly the sense of permanence and confidence felt by the people in the unchanging nature of their religion. Daily living might be perilous and uncertain but all was resolved in their fundamental convictions about life and about death.

It was against this background that the following generations were exposed to the shattering impact of the Reformation; to changes

so fundamental they can hardly begin to be conceived; to inroads of bewilderment and confusion that tore apart that solid, cohesive and ordered world.

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1. This sentiment is characteristic of many wills, e.g. the will of John Fiske, 1488. (SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f3)
2. The present dole table is made of red brick and is covered with a stone slab. It was given by Henry Cutler in 1601.
3. For will references, see complete list of Eye wills in appendix
4. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f31
5. Glanmor Williams, The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation (Cardiff, 1962) 469 (quoting G. R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Mediaeval England)
6. The efficacy of the trental was supposed to have been revealed by St Gregory to a monk who was having difficulty in purgatory but who was delivered from his pains on the thirtieth mass.
7. In a copy of the 1548 Chantry Certificate, the vicar of Eye noted that the soul of John Upston had been prayed for for sixty years. (SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f35v)
8. Glanmor Williams, op cit, 459
9. Glanmor Williams, op cit, 460 (quoting Henry Parker, Dives et Pauper)
10. Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Suffolk, revised by Enid Radcliffe (Penguin, 1974) 206
11. 'Calyon' is probably flint or pebble which gave the characteristic effect in early Suffolk building of combined flint and pebble, necessitated through the absence of a stone quarry in Suffolk. (VCH, Vol II, 24)
 Flint was gathered from the surface of the soil and it may be that Eye employed child labour for this task, as did the parish of North Elmham in Norfolk which paid out 2d for bread and drink to the 'scolers' when they gathered stones. (J. Charles Cox, Churchwardens' Accounts from the fourteenth to the close of the seventeenth century (London, 1913) 86)
12. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f23v
13. Henry Creed, The Church of St Peter & St Paul, Eye, Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 2 (1859) 126-128
14. Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward III, Vol 3, Part I, No. 37.
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15. VCH, II, 54
16. VCH, II, 25
17. J. Charles Cox, op cit, 212
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Chapter 3THE PRIORY

The Benedictine Priory of Eye was founded by Robert Malet in the eleventh century. Robert was the son of William Malet, the Norman baron who had built Eye Castle. Dedicated to St Peter, the Priory was given a liberal foundation charter which included the church, the market and a four-day fair at Eye. It was also granted the church, school and a fair at Dunwich, over twenty other churches, various plots of land and several mills and fisheries. Eye Priory began life as a cell of the Abbey of Bernay in Normandy but during the reign of Richard II it became naturalised and was in future to contain Englishmen only.⁽¹⁾

The Priory was half a mile outside the town but there was a close relationship between the two. A causeway led from the Priory to the Church; this was maintained by the owner of the Priory lands even after the Dissolution and an old local tradition also maintains that there was a secret passage between the Castle and the Priory.⁽²⁾ The Priory was responsible for keeping in good order five timber bridges - the three Abbey bridges as well as Lurgate and Botsford bridges - and it took an active and practical interest in the founding of Eye grammar school. Wills indicate close links between the community and the Priory and many testators asked especially for the prayers of particular monks, like John Mason who left 5s to the monk Richard Bettes or Joan Smyth who gave a rood of ground to the Prior. A few locals contributed to the fabric of the Priory. Walter Page left 3s 4d for the high altar and Symonde Seman gave 3s 4d towards the mending of the way near the abbey. At about the same time that the new tower was being built at Eye Church, one was also going up at the Priory. John Arnald gave money towards it in 1467 and twelve years later Robert Anyell left a certain amount 'to the emendation and making of the tower of Eye priory'. There were numerous small monetary gifts bequeathed to

the Priory and a few people, like William Gale, wished to be buried there. William Gale was a priest and he left 12d to every member of the Priory who attended his funeral mass. He also gave 2s to the Prior, 6d to every secular priest, 2d to every clerk and a penny each 'to every child that can syng deprofundis'. John Wodwarde was another local man who asked that his body be buried at the Priory:

And if the priour and the Convent of the same Abbaye will therunto assent and agree and helpe to fatche me thether whan I shalbe buryed Then in Recompens of the same buriall and lyeng in the same churche I will that the said priour shall have vi^s viii^d and every preast of the Convent iii^s iiii^d and every Noveis xiid.

But if such agreement from the Prior was not forthcoming, then John Wodwarde's body was to be buried in St Peter's Church

And my said gift to the same priour and convent in that behalfe to be voyde and of non effecte.

Perhaps John Wodwarde had greater confidence in the spiritual efficacy of the Priory than the Church. He can certainly have had little idea that within a few years of his death the Priory would no longer exist.

The main source of information about the internal life of the Priory for the fifty years preceding its dissolution in 1537 comes from the records of the six-yearly visitations made by the Bishop of Norwich or his deputies. The visitation made in 1493 by Archdeacon Goldwell seems to have been satisfactory. Richard Norwich was then Prior and upon examination of him and his nine monks it was found that no reforms were needed.⁽³⁾ In 1514, however, the picture was very different. This time the Bishop himself conducted the visitation and, of the eight monks examined, only three testified that all was well. The rest made various complaints, most of which indicated a degree of hostility between the brothers and the Prior. Brother Richard Stretforth complained that the common seal was used 'without the consent of the greater and senior part of the chapter', that the Prior sometimes sealed letters 'without mature deliberation' and that he did not render a proper account to the brothers every four years.

Brother Richard Ipswich was more blunt. He stated that Margery Bery, the laundress, was 'suspected with the prior'. Her husband, John Bery, was staying in London at the time and, according to Brother Richard, the Prior would do nothing without her advice. He had even built a house for her son Thomas out of wood which belonged to the Priory. Brother Richard also complained that the Prior had sold some of the Priory's wood even though the dormitory badly needed roof repairs 'and suffers ruin'. He had also lent several of the Priory's books to Dr. White and they had not yet been returned.

Brother Christopher Rickingale also alleged that the Prior had sold timber for building a house for Thomas Bery, whom he described as the Prior's servant. Brother William Norwich spoke of rumours that were circling in the town about two houses which had been built for 'the servants of the prior' out of Priory timber. The novice, Henry Coombs, said diplomatically that he thought all was well, although he did add rather discreetly that he thought Margery Bery came to the Priory too often.

The Bishop ordered the Prior to procure the return of the books from Dr. White and to ensure that a true inventory and statement of account be exhibited before the synod next Michaelmas. On the subject of Margery Bery he was decisive. He forbade her ever to enter the walls of the Priory again and with that adjourned his visitation until the following Michaelmas.⁽⁴⁾

There is no record of what happened at that Michaelmas visitation and the next one for which we have details was the normal six-yearly one which took place in the chapter house on 8th August 1520. On this occasion the Prior was named as Richard Bettes. He may or may not have been the same man who was Prior in the previous disastrous visitation but, in any event, little improvement seems to have taken place. On being questioned about the state of the house and the 'essentials of religion', Prior Bettes was satisfied that all was well

but of his eight monks only one agreed with him. Richard Ixworth complained that they did not 'observe the refectory' and William Norwich alleged that certain silver vessels had been sold off by the Prior. Christopher Rickingale also referred to the disappearance of those silver vessels and said that the Priory had insufficient brethren for divine observance. He also mentioned that the Prior had rendered only one account since his appointment. Henry Coombs, William Hadley, Richard Snape and John Harling all agreed about the lack of accounts.

The main subject of complaint, however, centred once more on the Prior's relationship with a woman. This time it was Margaret Veer. Six of the monks referred to this. Brother William Norwich said that she stayed with the Prior and lived 'suspectly'; that it was rumoured she kept the keys of the Prior's chamber in his absence, served at his table and slept in a little room near his chamber. Brother Christopher reported the local gossip about Margaret Veer and said she was dominant in the offices and served publicly at the Prior's table. She also knew much too much about the correction of the brothers. Brother Henry agreed and went even further by accusing her of instigating disputes between the Prior and the brethren. Brother Richard Snape confirmed that she caused friction between them all and that she complained to the Prior about the other monks.

This visitation was clearly not satisfactory and it was adjourned until the following Christmas.⁽⁵⁾

It is clear from these visitation reports that the Priory gave the town plenty to talk about. There is no record of the ultimate outcome of this particular visitation: perhaps Margaret Veer suffered the same fate as Margery Bery the laundress and was banned from ever entering the Priory again. Whatever happened, Margaret and her husband Roger did not completely sever all their ties with the Priory for they kept in close touch with Francis Rogges, one of the monks.

(Almost twenty years later, after the Priory had been dissolved, he was mentioned in both their wills. Roger Veer died in December 1539 and Francis Rogges, now a priest, acted as his witness. His widow, Margaret, died the following year and to Francis Rogges she left her largest single bequest of 6s 8d.)

Had the situation at the Priory remained as it had been for the first two decades of the century, then it would support the views of those historians who maintain that monastic life in pre-Reformation England had become lax, undisciplined and often immoral, that there was a general weakening in the ideal of monastic life and that there was a decided lack of vocation in many of the monks and nuns. But once again we are reminded that generalisations have no place in local history for quite suddenly, with the appointment of a new Prior, conditions at Eye Priory improved dramatically. The Bishop of Norwich himself conducted the next visitation, in 1526, and it is clear that all the previous internal wrangling had died down. The Prior and the nine monks first assembled in the chapter house to hear the sermon preached by Master Multon and then they were all questioned separately. John Eye was the new Prior. He had probably been at the Priory for well over thirty years and so knew well the sort of things that could so easily disrupt community life. He told the Bishop that, as far as he knew, everything was now well. The sub-Prior, William Norwich, confirmed this and said that the Prior had reformed things well. The other monks agreed and there was only one minor point of dissent which concerned the box containing the common seal. At present, only one key was being used to lock this when there should in fact have been three; and, in any case, it was possible to open the box without a key at all. Four of the monks mentioned this and the Bishop ordered that a box with three locks and three different keys was to be made so that the common seal and other

muniments could be kept in safety and that no one brother should keep all the keys. Attendance was still rather low at the offices and the Bishop ordered that three priests should be present each day at Compline and that all the monks should attend the offices on feast days unless legitimately prevented. On the whole the Bishop was now satisfied with the conditions at Eye Priory and he dissolved the visitation.⁽⁶⁾

The last recorded visitation of the Priory took place on 2nd July 1532. Again it was conducted by the Bishop himself and before the brethren were examined they listened to a sermon on the text 'The sufferings of this time which shall be revealed in us are not worthy of future glory'. The present Prior was William Hadley, who had been the cellarer on the previous visitation. He presented his account for the previous year which showed a balance in hand of 49s 5½d. There was still a problem over the common seal as the Bishop's previous injunctions had not been complied with. The Prior said it was still kept under one lock only and the sub-Prior was in charge of the key. The sub-Prior, William Norwich, agreed that he held the key but said that the box itself was in the Prior's custody. One of the main causes of complaint on this occasion seems to have concerned the utensils and 'necessaries' of the infirmary. Several monks complained that these were kept in the hands of the sub-Prior and the infirmarer and that they were not being used for the benefit of the sick. It was also alleged that these two monks had removed two of the infirmary beds and slept in them themselves. The infirmarer himself, Brother Richard Ipswich, naturally did not refer to such irregularities. His complaint was that outsiders had made a common way through the gardens of the Priory.

Several of the brothers referred to some confusion arising from the use of the ordinal. Brother Christopher, the precentor, said they had two ordinals, one old and one new, but both had been erased

in many places and were contradictory. He also added that they no longer celebrated the feasts of the Visitation of the Blessed Mary and the Name of Jesus because they did not have the necessary service books. Brothers Richard Ipswich, Henry Coombs, Richard Snape and Thomas Hadley also complained about the state of the ordinal and Brother Francis Eye said it was a cause of dissension among the brethren.⁽⁷⁾

This confusion over the ordinal may well reflect a growing conflict within the Priory which had its origin in the circulation in East Anglia of the new theological ideas coming from the continent for in the twenties and thirties Lutheran and Zwinglian heresies were beginning to find their way inside some of the religious houses of Suffolk. Dr. Rougham of Bury had been preaching radical Lutheran doctrines in Oxford in the late twenties and, although he later conformed, he presumably influenced at least two monks of St Edmunds who were forced to abjure their heretical opinions in 1529. These were William Blomfield and Richard Bayfield. (The latter subsequently recanted his abjuration for which he paid the ultimate penalty and was burned at the stake.) Westacre, the Augustinian house, was affected as was the Augustinian friary at Stoke by Clare; here three of the brethren were forced to abjure in 1532.⁽⁸⁾

The Benedictine Priory at Eye was certainly infected with such beliefs in the person of William Leiton, one of the monks. Shortly after the dissolution, he was accused of heresy for 'speaking against a certain Idoll which was accustomed to be carried about the Processions' in the town. He also believed that the eucharist should be administered in both kinds. William Leiton refused to deny his beliefs and he too paid the inevitable price. He was burned at Norwich in 1537.⁽⁹⁾

We do not know just what support William Leiton had within the Priory for his beliefs, but the theological dissension in 1532 may well indicate that some of the brethren were sympathetic to his ideas - and therefore sympathetic to Lutheranism. And it may not be entirely irrelevant that, many years later during the Marian deprivations of the clergy, two ex-monks of Eye (who had since become clerics) were themselves deprived of their livings. These were Francis Rogges and William Riches who most probably lost their livings for reasons of marriage. While we must be careful not to equate marriage with religious belief, clearly these two monks were not such orthodox Catholics that they were obliged to remain celibate.⁽¹⁰⁾

A further tentative piece of evidence which supports the picture of a Priory influenced by Protestantism concerns William Hadley, alias Parker, who was the last Prior of Eye. As a young man he had studied at Gonville Hall, Cambridge, where he gained his Bachelor of Divinity degree. (Gonville had a special association with Eye and several scholars from the grammar school went on to study there.) William Hadley was at Cambridge during the years 1515-1519 where it is more than likely he caught the beginnings of the early Lutheran circle there, and indeed several men from his college were associated with the White Horse circle, including Robert Butteler, John Skip, Nicholas Shaxton and William Warner (who was later to become confessor to the influential preacher Thomas Bilney). Gonville Hall was the college specially picked out by Bishop Nykke as one of the seats of Protestant thinking; in May 1530 he wrote that 'Clerks coming from Gonville Hall in Cambridge smelt of the frying pan'.⁽¹¹⁾

The extent of sympathy for Lutheran doctrines within the Priory must, however, remain a matter for speculation and we do not know whether it was with reluctance, enthusiasm or indifference that on

20th October 1534 the Prior, the sub-Prior and six other monks appended their signatures to a document in the chapter-house which confirmed King Henry's supremacy over the church in England.⁽¹²⁾

The following year saw the passing of the Act for First Fruits and Tenths. This piece of legislation, which annexed the first fruits of all spiritual benefices to the Crown and demanded a tenth of the net income as an annual tax, involved the compilation of that massive survey Valor Ecclesiasticus. This assessed in detail all clerical incomes from bishoprics down to the smallest chapels and the result led to an annual income of over £40,000 for the Crown.⁽¹³⁾ Eye Priory was, of course, among those assessed in this complicated fiscal undertaking. At its foundation in the eleventh century, the Priory had had the advantages of a very liberal charter but its income in the sixteenth century would undoubtedly have been higher had it not incurred a series of drastic losses in Dunwich, where the encroaching sea had swallowed up the Priory's cell and no less than six churches. The Valor Ecclesiasticus calculated the clear annual value of the temporalities of Eye Priory as £112 19s 5½d which arose from the manors of Eye, Stoke, Occold, Laxfield, Bedfield and Fressingfield. The spiritualities yielded a total income of £71 10s 2d from two Lincolnshire churches and from the Suffolk churches of Eye, Laxfield, Yaxley, Dunwich, Playford and others. In addition, the Priory received pensions from twenty-three churches in Suffolk, one in Lincolnshire and two in Norfolk.

The income of the spiritualities was subject to considerable outgoings, however, (including over £14 given to the poor) which reduced the net value to £23 7s 4½d, and so the total income of the Priory placed it in that category of religious houses with an annual value of under £200 and therefore it was subject to dissolution under the 1536 Act.⁽¹⁴⁾ Had it not been for those losses made by the incursions of the north sea at Dunwich it is possible

that it might have been given a reprieve for a year or two. There were eleven monastic houses in Norfolk and Suffolk which did manage to survive until 1539.⁽¹⁵⁾ But the Priory at Eye was doomed after five centuries lived (or perhaps endeavouring to live) according to the Benedictine rule.

The Suffolk commissioners, whose job it was to draw up a complete inventory of monastic goods and property prior to closure, visited it on 26th August 1536. They were Sir Anthony Wingfield, Sir Humphrey Wingfield, Sir Thomas Rushe, Richard Southwell and Thomas Mildmay. They examined systematically every room, building and outhouse belonging to the Priory, noted carefully the contents and estimated the value of each item. Two days later they were repeating the same exercise at Ixworth Priory.

This inventory gives for the first time a detailed description of Eye Priory. In addition to the church, which contained two chapels, there was a vestry, four rooms ('the Quenes chambr', the 'paynted chambr', the 'Inner chambr' and the 'grene chambr'), a pantry, kitchen, bakehouse and brewhouse, a hall and a parlour. The contents of the Priory were assessed at £35 17s 10d, although this was increased by another £10 when the corn at present growing on the Priory lands was added.

After completing what must have seemed to the monks their unhappy task, the commissioners then 'delivered' the entire contents of the Priory to William Hadley for safe keeping on the King's behalf.⁽¹⁶⁾

One entry in this inventory has particular significance for it is one of the last recorded references to the famous Red Book of Eye. This was an ancient book of the gospels thought to have been used by St Felix, the seventh century missionary who established a bishopric at Dunwich. It was apparently kept in the vestry of the Priory.

Item an olde Masse boke callyd the redde boke of Eye garnysshed with a lytell sylver on the one side the residewe lytell worth.

The Red Book of Eye - so-called because it was probably bound in red (either red velvet or russet) - was described by the sixteenth-century antiquarian Leland as written in large Lombardic letters and as having an appearance of 'wonderfully great antiquity'.⁽¹⁷⁾ It is quite likely that this ancient relic was preserved at the mother house at Eye in order to save it from the destruction of the sea at Dunwich. (It was by no means the only precious Dunwich relic to be preserved in this way: the ninth-century seal of Bishop Ethelwald of Dunwich was also kept there.)⁽¹⁸⁾ According to Leland, it was known locally as the Red Book of Eye, was used for the swearing of oaths and the monks consistently maintained that it was the genuine book of St Felix.⁽¹⁹⁾

The somewhat brisk conclusion of the 1536 commissioners that it was 'lytell worth' is ironic to say the least for, as another historian has ruefully remarked, in reality it would be simply priceless.⁽²⁰⁾ Its evaluation in 1536 at just 20d is eloquent of the changing attitudes to history and to the past that have occurred over the last few centuries.

The subsequent fate of the Red Book of Eye remains an unsolved mystery which has teased antiquarians for a century or more. Suggestions as to its present whereabouts have varied from a private library in Norfolk to the library bequeathed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, by Archbishop Parker. One theory even had it being cut up for labels in the nineteenth century.⁽²¹⁾

However, at the dissolution the Prior - far from keeping it safe on behalf of the King - probably gave it to Eye Church and its most likely fate was that shared by many of the other church contents when a considerable amount of plate and valuables were sold off in the 1540s. Included among a list of chalices, censers, paxes and other valuables sold by the churchwardens in Norwich in 1548 is 'the sylver of a masse booke that the prior did gyve'. It was sold by Robert London and Thomas Blow but no record was kept of the amount

it raised.⁽²²⁾

The formal suppression of the Priory took place a few months after the visit of the commissioners on 12th February 1537⁽²³⁾ and in the following April the entire site and possessions of the Priory were granted to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, for an annual rent of £136 8s 10d. This grant included the buildings, orchards and gardens of the Priory, which covered some ten acres of ground, as well as churches, rectories, advowsons, houses, manors, tenements and rents. Two years later it all passed into the hands of the Crown.⁽²⁴⁾

It is impossible to guess at the extent or nature of local reaction to the closure of the monastery which had formed such a vital part of their community for five hundred years. And although the new secular landlords of the old monastic lands were required to keep up the level of hospitality (under pain of a fine of over £6 a month)⁽²⁵⁾ it is quite likely that it was the local poor who were the first to experience the chill winds of the King's new policy. Between 1536 and 1539 Suffolk was swept clean of all its religious orders and the amount of alms emanating from some thirty monasteries must have been seriously curtailed. In Eye, over £14 had been distributed to the poor during the Priory's last year of existence and there is little doubt that the hardship of the local poor would have increased considerably, throwing them back onto the mercies of the neighbourhood.

Then there was the destruction of a familiar landmark. Robert Aske had described the monastic houses of England as 'one of the beauties of this realm'⁽²⁶⁾ and, to those who minded, official vandalism towards such buildings must have been especially galling. Judging from evidence taken from other parts of the country, it is unlikely to have taken place without some local reaction, however impotent it was in the end. In Exeter, local women actually

physically attacked the workmen who were suppressing their Priory of St Nicholas.⁽²⁷⁾

Whatever the reaction of individuals, this first overt act by Henry must have hardened attitudes in one direction or the other thus beginning the process of polarising opinion. The supremacy in 1534 would have been for most people little more than a theoretical idea, but now there was something alarmingly tangible about the closure of the monasteries and it was a decisive act that bore more directly on people's lives and experience than any other aspect of the English Church so far. Nevertheless, hostility to the closures does not necessarily indicate an ardent support of the Catholic Church and outrage at events that were changing their lives, their long-standing customs, their familiar landmarks and the people they knew, would in many cases arise from the natural conservatism of the human spirit and the tendency to cling to what was familiar in the face of these uncharted waters.

Change was all around in the 1530s and we know from other periods of history that times of uncertainty or transition provide fertile ground for reactionarism. And for no other body of men and women at this period was change so severe and so painful as for the monks and nuns who found themselves cast out into a world where they had somehow got to survive. Most religious were, according to Fuller, given 20s and a new gown which, he says, needed 'to be of cloth to last so long till they get another' for many of them were to face considerable want in the years to come.⁽²⁸⁾ There is scant evidence of what happened to the handful of monks from Eye Priory. One of them at least did not survive very long. Richard Alleen stayed in the locality and he died the very next year. He was buried at Eye Church on 29th December 1538 where the parish register records he was 'somytyme a monk of Eye'.⁽²⁹⁾

The Prior was rather more fortunate. He received a pension of £18 a year which he augmented by taking over the job of local school-master for a time.⁽³⁰⁾ Although there was officially a pension scheme for ex-religious it was often not very satisfactory and it led in time to various abuses: necessity compelled some monks and nuns to part with their pension patents in return for ready money and there were cases in which those responsible for distributing the pensions were found to be charging illegal fees. In 1552, the government of Edward VI tried to remedy some of these abuses and commissioners were appointed to hold investigations in each county. Among those who testified at the Suffolk commission was William Hadley, the ex-Prior of Eye, along with the Prior of Woodbridge, the Abbot of Leiston and the Prioress of Redlingfield. Each of them appeared personally before the members of the commission and confirmed that they were still in receipt of their respective pensions which they had 'neyther solde nor assignede'.⁽³¹⁾

In Cardinal Pole's pension list of 1555-6 (which shows that over £600 was being distributed to various pensioners all over Suffolk) William Hadley was again noted as being in receipt of his £18 annual income. He is described in this pension list as 'an honest vertuous and catholick man, not married' who had become parson of Tostock in the mid-forties. Like many ex-religious he had eventually taken a secular living and (as was the case with all the former abbots and priors in the Diocese of Norwich) he continued to hold his benefice in addition to his pension. He died and was buried in Tostock in 1556.⁽³²⁾

Some of the other Eye monks also took secular livings, and we have already seen that two of them, Francis Rogges and William Riches, lost their livings at Saxtead and Playford respectively during the reign of Queen Mary. William Riches, probably alias Norwich, was apparently the elder of the two and his name first occurs in the

1514 visitation of the Priory. In the twenties and thirties he became the sub-Prior against whom complaints were made that he was using one of the infirmary beds as his own. Francis Rogges, probably alias Eye, had been a novice at the Priory in 1526 and is mentioned as deacon there in 1532. Although deprived of his living under Mary, he was quite quickly reinstated during the reign of her Protestant sister for he became curate of Athelington, a small village just a few miles south-east of Eye, and his signature appears on the 1559 subscription lists when he professed loyalty to the Church of England.

For the rest of the Eye monks, when they disappeared from the Priory they also disappeared from history and we know nothing of their subsequent fate. It was an ignominious end to Robert Malet's grandiose foundation of five hundred years earlier.

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22. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f29v
23. VCH, II, 75
24. William Dugdale, op cit, 403
The Duke of Suffolk also acquired Leiston Abbey in Suffolk and the Duke of Norfolk bought Bungay Priory.
(Lilian J. Redstone, Suffolk, Borzei County Histories (1930) 68).
The Duke of Suffolk does not appear to have been granted the complete possessions of Eye Priory since part of them apparently passed to the Monastery of St Edmunds which was not surrendered to the crown until the end of 1539. A list of lands and possessions belonging to this monastery, made at its suppression, included 'a parcel of the late monastery of Eye and the chape (sic) called Choksmynes in the same' which was granted to Anthony Rows of Dennington 'for certain rents specified to be paid in the Court of Augmentations'.
(Lands and Possessions late belonging to the Monastery of St Edmunds, Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 13 (1909) 361).
25. William Holland, Cratfield: A Transcript of the Accounts of the Parish from AD 1490 to AD 1642, with Notes, ed John James Raven (London, 1895) 54
26. Christopher Haigh, Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire (Cambridge, 1975) 123
27. D. M. Palliser, Popular Reactions to the Reformation during the Years of Uncertainty 1530-1570, in Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James I, ed Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (London, 1977) 37
28. G. F. Maclear, op cit
29. SRO Ipswich, FB135/D1/1, Register Book of Eye in Suffolk (No. 1) 1538
30. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f21v
VCH, II, 75
31. VCH, II, 32
32. Geoffrey Baskerville, op cit, 226
VCH, II, 32
33. Geoffrey Baskerville, op cit, 62
Lambeth Palace Library, CM XIII/57, Subscription book of the clergy & schoolmasters of the dioceses of London & Norwich, to the restoration of state jurisdiction, the abolition of all foreign powers & the administration of sacraments according to the Prayer Book, according to the parliament of 23 Jan. 1559.

Chapter 4THE GRAMMAR SCHOOLThe scholar complains

Hay! hay! by this day,
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

I wold fain be a clarke,
 But yet it is a strange werke:
 The birchen twigges be so sharpe,
 It maketh me have a faint harte.
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

On Monday in the morning whan I shall rise,
 At six of the klok, it is the gise
 To go to skole without avise -
 I had lever go twenty mile twice.
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

My master loketh as he were madde:
 'Wher hast thou be, thou sory ladde?'
 'Milked duckes, my moder badde'.
 It was no mervaille, though I were sadde!
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

My master pepered my ars with well good spede:
 It was worse than finkill sede.
 He wold not leve till it did blede -
 Mich sorow have he for his dede!
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

I wold my master were a watt,
 And my boke a wild catt,
 And a brase of grehoundes in his toppe -
 I wold be glade for to see that!
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

I wold my master were an hare,
 And all his bokes houndes were,
 And I myself a joly hontere:
 To blow my horn I wold not spare,
 For if he were dede I wold not care!
 What availeth it me though I say, nay?

The origins of the grammar school at Eye are obscure and the ambiguity attending its foundation was the cause of continuing conflict in the town for well over thirty years during the Reformation period.

The uncertainty centred on the will of John Fiske which was drawn up towards the end of the fifteenth century. A letter written by the vicar of Eye, Thomas Golding, linked the beginnings of the grammar school with his bequest (referring to the first foundation and John Fiske's will) and this is confirmed by the 1548 Chantry Certificate which stated that certain lands and tenements had been

put in Feoffamente by John Fiske and others for the
fyndyng of a Scoole Maister in Eye aforesaid for ever. (1)

John Fiske was, as we have already seen, one of Eye's leading benefactors. He is described as a husbandman and his will was dated 9th November 1488. (2) In it he gave eighty marks

to the brothers and sisters and men of the guild of
the Blessed Mary and St Peter of Eye

with which they were to buy land for the maintenance of a chaplain or priest 'called a guild priest' whose function was to celebrate mass in the parish church. The eighty marks were to be paid within four years of the donor's death on condition that the townsfolk of Eye had in the meantime acquired further lands to augment the original gift. If they failed in this, then the town would lose the bequest and it would be used instead to provide prayers for the souls of John Fiske and his parents.

The idea immediately caught the imagination of some of the local people and it offered a new focus for further gifts and legacies. Rose Fuller gave 13s 4d within two years of the original bequest and, in the same year, Agnes Mason gave 6s 8d 'toward the land to be purchased for a priest's service'.

But despite the initial enthusiasm, the town did not find it easy to acquire the land and as time went on there was a real danger

that it would lose John Fiske's original gift because, as the vicar maintained, suitable land was difficult to find. Indeed, had it not been for the energies of Thomas Golding in keeping up the momentum it is quite likely that the bequest would have been lost and that it would have reverted to its secondary purpose as a personal chantry.

In a letter written to the Prior of Eye (probably in the early 1530s and therefore some thirty or forty years after the event) Thomas Golding recalled the difficulties encountered by the town in acquiring the additional land ('We coulde not fynde none in no place that was mete for us') and then went on to describe how he discussed the affair with John Fanner. John Fanner was a leading man in town affairs and the solution arrived at by the two men demonstrates an unusually communal approach to mediaeval problem-solving.

I thanke almighty god for it that it was my fortune that I desiered John Fanner to breake his faste withe me in the vicariedge the daye before new yere in Christmas. And as we satte by the fyre we comonyd howe that the towne should lose this service the whiche should be greate rebuke onto all the town. Then the holy goste pute hym in mend. Saythe Jhon Fanner, Sir, saythe he to me, what woll you saye and I woll sell you? My good John Fanner, saide I unto hymn, Maye you sell it. Yea for god maye I sell it for I bought it of my father and paide more for it than it was worthe. What shall I give you for it? Ten skore marke, sayde he, and rather than ye shoulde lose the service, so that I and my frendes maye be partners of the prayers, take it for nine skore marke, and I thought good to take hym in his good mynde. I toke hym a peice of gold, saieng on to hym on this manner: John Fanner, this pece of gold I geve the on this condicon that ye shull geve me respecte to geve you an Answer till that the Sunne gooe downe on Sondaye next comyng. Yf it be a bargayne take that for your ernest penny, and if so be it be no bargaine yet I gyve it you for yowr good will and for the respyte that you gave me in the matter. I went unto the pulpit the next Sondaye and showed unto all the parishe that we were like to lose the service, the whiche should be a great rebuke to all the towne. Howe saye ye now, said I unto them, if I have bought a ground for you so that ye maye stonde in the churche yard and see it, and I showed them how I had made a Bargaine withe John Fanner and showed them the daies of payment, so that on Candlemas folowing he should have £20 and at candlemas next ensewing £20, so £10 a yere forthe till it were paid for. And if it be a bargaine because it for the comon wele, speake all Una Voce and saye ye this was a godly hearinge. Every man, woman and childe seide yea, yea. Dyverse men gave 10 marke a peice, women fower marke, 20s and 40s, 20d and 40d, so

that I gathered on Candlemas daye above £20. We toke niver a penny of this fower skore marke. We desiered lond for it, the whiche laye by John Fanners, and I bought a peice of Watkin Pishmer, the whiche John Fanner had solde hym before in his neade, and I gave it for me and my frendes sowles. And on candlemas daye at the first payment putte the preste in possession, Mr. Prime, and an other Sir Stephen, after hym Sir Webster, Mr. Dunston, with other mooe. (3)

This letter, which was addressed to the Prior of Eye, also shows that the Priory was involved with the new chantry priest for Thomas Golding reminds the Prior that at least three of his predecessors - Prior Donne, Prior Richard Norwich and Prior Belinges - 'gave moche money towards it'. (4)

Although John Fiske himself had made no specific reference in his will to the school or to a schoolmaster, the early records of the grammar school do confirm its association with a chantry and it was this aspect especially, in their concern over their souls, that most captured the enthusiasm of the local people. John Fiske's original bequest was simply for a guild priest to conduct masses for the dead at the parish church. Those of the faithful who contributed their own varying amounts of money would have done so on the understanding that their souls too, when the time came, would share in the benefits of those masses. Even the vicar insured his own future by endowing a piece of land which he gave 'for me and my frendes sowles'. John Fiske's will referred to a run-of-the-mill chantry, but it seems that the energetic vicar took the opportunity it offered to turn it into something more tangible, something more socially useful, and he immediately installed a chantry priest who possessed the ability to teach. Those priests named by him in his letter - Mr. Prime, Sir Stephen, Sir Webster and Mr. Dunston - were all early schoolmasters at Eye. (5)

This was clearly a piece of opportunism on the part of the vicar and we certainly cannot assume that the community's enthusiasm for the project had anything to do with the value of education. The

obscurity surrounding the relationship between the original chantry and the school may in part reflect the vicar's not entirely guileless action, and there is more than a touch of irony in the fact that, half a century later, his little intrigue was to become the focus of considerable wrangling in Eye. It would be a gross over-simplification to suggest that these quarrels reflected a neat Catholic and Protestant division, but nevertheless there were two main groups and the question of religion did form a considerable part of the conflict.

It all centred on the role of the schoolmaster, about which both sides were particularly sensitive. The 'Catholic' or conservative or traditionalist element strongly supported the schoolmaster's priestly functions and were concerned first and foremost that his task was primarily an ecclesiastical one. The 'Protestant' or radical group put much greater emphasis on his educational role and the natural consequence of this was that his duties could just as easily be undertaken by a layman. The fluctuations in fortune of these two groups, as each gained ascendancy only to lose it again, are matched only by the dramatic swings in the pendulum of faith within the country as a whole. When the schoolmaster also happened to be a priest, then we may assume that the traditionalists held temporary sway; when he was merely a layman then it is evident that the radicals had scored a point. Not unnaturally, these changes did for the most part also reflect the larger tapestry in the country and Edward's reign gave exactly the same kind of boost to the radicals as Mary's reign gave to the traditionalists.

Had the foundation of the grammar school been less hazy in the beginning and the situation made more explicit, then a lot of this discord may have been averted. But a certain amount of ambiguity probably suited Thomas Golding since it left him the space to manipulate John Fiske's bequest in the direction he chose. He could not know it would also leave space for considerable bickering later

and be the cause of many headaches to his successor, Richard Thurkettle.

The school probably started life about 1495, for it was at this time that John Fanner gave nine pieces of land in Cranley hamlet 'to the Use of the Parish Church of St Peter of Eye'.⁽⁶⁾ A will of 1496 confirms that the land had already been acquired, since Richard Punchard left 3s 4d a year towards the payment 'of the land purchased for the priest's service'. Although it was originally given for 'the use of the church', over the years it came to be generally accepted that the revenues from it should support the chantry priest-cum-schoolmaster, and some fifty years later the same land was being used to maintain 'a sufficient Master in the School of Eye to instruct the Scholars there'.⁽⁷⁾ This was in 1550 when Robert Seman and others were admitted to the land following the death of Thomas Golding. And again, in 1587, the same land was referred to 'for the finding of a master in the School of Eye to instruct the Scholars there'. In the absence of any specific references, these assumptions can only have been bred of usage.

Thomas Golding was evidently an enthusiast for education and he lost no time in ensuring that his new school was safeguarded by a licence. Immediately following the acquisition of John Fanner's lands (plus another eleven acres known as Scole Close) he went to neighbouring Brome with John Porter, a chaplain, to obtain a licence for the school. This licence stipulated that

no gramer schole should be kept within vii myles and that they mought teach all the vii sciences. (8)

It is not very clear on whose authority this licence was issued, but it may well have come from the Cornwallis family who lived at Brome Hall and who had close connections with the town of Eye. Such gentry involvement would be consistent with Nicholas Orme's findings

concerning the licensing of individual schoolmasters when he concludes that the right to license often lay in private hands.⁽⁹⁾

The school rapidly became an established part of Eye life and among those leaving money to continue this particular 'priest's service' was the local butcher, John Mason, who gave 6s 8d in 1500. (Although for people like John Mason, it was more likely at this stage to be the chantry function rather than the educational function that most attracted him.) It was to be another priest at Eye, this time William Gale, who advanced the educational side. In his will of 1506 he forged the link with the University of Cambridge which was to be so important to the grammar school by providing for two scholars from Eye to study at Gonville & Caius College. In the course of time, many Eye scholars would continue their education at Gonville & Caius. The first two scholarships went to Richard Smyth and Gyles Webster (the latter was the nephew of one of the early schoolmasters). These students were not to enter Cambridge until they were 'speedy' in their grammar and then they were to remain there for five years, receiving forty shillings a year towards their exhibition. All this was on condition that they attended mass daily and recited *de profundis* - providing, added their benefactor with an air of practical wisdom, that such devotional activities did not hinder their studies.⁽¹⁰⁾

Very little is heard of the school for two decades or so during which time it presumably ticked over with few difficulties, although a list of schoolmasters later compiled by Richard Thurkettle does suggest a rather rapid turnover in teaching staff. The list includes twenty-four names, beginning with the very earliest masters. Twenty of these were priests and, of those twenty, ten were Masters of Arts, eight Bachelors of Arts, one was a local chaplain and the other the ex-Prior of the Benedictine community at Eye (who we know from elsewhere was a Bachelor of Divinity). Of the four laymen named by Richard Thurkettle, two held the degree of Master of Arts. The list

concludes with the name of the master who left the school in 1556. This means that, over a period of about sixty years, Eye school had twenty-four different masters - an average stay of two and a half years each. It is impossible to tell whether this rapid rate of change signifies some fundamental difficulty about the school. It may be that young graduate clerics tended to use the school as a stepping-stone to the more prestigious establishments, such as Eton and Winchester, or perhaps to higher preferments within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Whatever the reason, Eye - unlike other places - clearly did not attract the dedicated teacher willing to spend his life in the classroom. (11)

Despite the regular turnover in teaching staff, Eye nevertheless succeeded in attracting unusually well qualified teachers. The leading endowed schools, like Eton, Magdalen, St Paul's and Winchester, had little difficulty in employing graduates, but elsewhere they were much less common. Of forty-eight masters known to have taught in the west country between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, only fourteen have been identified as graduates. (12) Complaints by sixteenth century humanist writers about the calibre of schoolmasters could certainly not be said to apply to Eye:

Lorde god, howe many good and clene wittes of children
be nowe a dayes perished by ignorant schole maistres (13)

In fact the only criticisms we have of the school were levelled more at the behaviour of the scholars, although this also bore directly on the question of discipline in the classroom. In the perhaps rather jaded opinion of Richard Thurkettle, there was a considerable decline in standards of behaviour when lay schoolmasters began to be appointed rather than clerical ones:

Whan thes layemen had the service than goddes service
began to decay in the chirche and the scolers were nat
so dilygently applyed and tawghte neyther in nurture
nor in lernyng of vertu and good maners. (14)

This comment reflects the central controversy surrounding the school

which was the movement among an influential section of the population to secularise it and remove from it the taint of all religious (or perhaps it might be more correct to say Catholic) affiliations.

It is just possible that this group of men were being perceptive enough to anticipate the crown's eventual takeover of all church property and that they were therefore attempting to secularise the school by bringing it under borough control, which would ensure its continuance at Eye, rather than allowing it to become a pawn of the crown. (The Suffolk Chantry certificates clearly show that it was not uncommon during the forties for laymen to hold ecclesiastical positions in an attempt to prevent their income being confiscated by the crown.)⁽¹⁵⁾ However, this does seem unlikely, since the process of secularisation at Eye can be detected as far back as the late twenties or early thirties which was several years before the dissolution of the monasteries and well over a decade before the crown seized all chantry foundations.⁽¹⁶⁾ It is true that the King's divorce may already have been going through and that the processes of change had begun, but it is unlikely that anyone at this stage could have guessed just what form the English Reformation would take and where it would be likely to lead and it does not seem realistic to suppose that this early attempt at Eye to withdraw the school from its ecclesiastical connections could represent such a judicious anticipation of the crown's behaviour.

Secularisation may have reflected the increasing self-awareness of the community and particularly those men seeking to extend the power and influence of the borough into areas not previously under its jurisdiction. This was increasingly happening in Eye during the middle decades of the sixteenth century as the borough encroached more and more on areas which had once been the sole province of the church. Or perhaps it was that different factions were struggling for power within the town and that control of the school would

represent a significant achievement. However, considering the times, and the fact that an early Protestant influence can be detected in Eye, this battle over the school might simply represent a more straightforward religious conflict, one in which a group of zealous sympathisers with Luther sought to liberate the young from the unhealthy influences of papistry, the priesthood or purgatorial fires.

If this were the original motivation of a handful of people, then it would not be surprising to find them accompanied by others who were jumping onto the bandwagon of expediency. In this case, the so-called 'Protestant' group would comprise a number of adherents for whom the state of religion was but one thread. Men are partisan for an endless variety of reasons: ancient quarrels, legal wrangles, old loyalties and long-standing friendships would all have played their part in the formation and extension of any group or faction. Then there would be the fellow-travellers, those who would perceive the direction events were taking and would hope to advance them for their own ends. This would especially apply to those men who wished to advance the powers of the borough at the cost of the church. Such people would not only promote a lay involvement in the person and function of the schoolmaster, but they would also seek to transfer control of the school from the guilds, with their mediaeval and religious associations, to the oligarchy that governed the town. This sort of movement was not uncommon during this period.⁽¹⁷⁾ The motives of such men would not be primarily theological, although they would probably be content to support (and in some cases genuinely would) a particular party-line in the expectation that one of its consequences would fit in very nicely with their own ends.

Although we can only be very hesitant about personal motivation, what we can be sure about is that there were two main factions in Eye who fought bitterly against each other during the period of the Reformation and that the first hints of this discord made themselves

felt on the question of who should control the grammar school and who should teach its students.

The grammar school, then, became the first focus of religious debate in the town, and looming large in that debate was the question of purgatory. Those wishing to secularise the school must have outraged those of a conservative disposition who wished the ecclesiastical involvement to continue, not only perhaps because it implied certain standards of morality and behaviour, but principally for its chantry associations. After all, it was not only the wealthy who had staked an interest; many of the more humble inhabitants had contributed lesser sums in the hope of receiving the benefits in prayers and masses for their soul. Considerable distress must have been caused to their sons and daughters at the prospect of those prayers being disregarded, prayers which were intended to alleviate the agony of souls in purgatory. It was precisely this aspect - that the souls were not 'deceived' - which most troubled Thomas Golding, by now an absentee vicar, when he wrote to the Prior of Eye from his Lincolnshire home:

Good Master Prior, I hartily praye you in the reverence of almighty god to putte to your holpinge hand to see the priests service in Eye may gooe on to the same use that it was purchased for. John Fiske, Jesu have mercy upon his sowle, gave fowr skore marke to the towne of Eye toward a prestes service ... What mis-chevous men woll breake John Fiske's will and all the sowles to be un-prayed for. Thei that be most busiest gave never a penny to it. You, principall, and the vicar withe the towne should se that it should gooe to the use it was purchased for. For your predecessors Donne, Richard Norwiche and prior Belinges gave moche mony towarde it. I fear me and it were for to dooe it should never be doone. I am principall feffor in all the londes. I will se the sowlis shall not be deceyved withe your good helpe and my lord of Norwiche, by goddes grace, whose grace and mercy ever more preserve you and all yours. (18)

Those 'mischievous men' who were trying to 'break' the conditions of the original will were evidently a force to be reckoned with for not only had the absentee vicar himself been drawn in, it was also becoming necessary to assemble against them the whole weight

of the local ecclesiastical establishment. Thomas Golding was even prepared to approach the Bishop of Norwich for assistance in the struggle.

At this point, all further references to this particular skirmish cease. Richard Thurkettle's silence on the issue probably implies a victory for the conservatives and certainly the Protestant cause in Eye underwent a serious setback in 1532 with the interrogation by the Bishop of Norwich of two local shoemakers accused of 'a wicked heretical act'. The two incidents - of the school and the shoemakers - may not at all be unrelated and when Thomas Golding threatened to bring in the Bishop himself he may have set in motion a whole series of events which culminated in these accusations of heresy.

Any solution arrived at, however, was merely temporary for the whole affair blew up once again at the end of the thirties. Meanwhile, the wills of local people remind us that, amid all the struggles for patronage of the school, it still continued its primary function of education. It is impossible to estimate the degree of real interest shown locally in the school (and evidence later in the century suggests that the majority of scholars came from outside the town) but there were some townsfolk who seized the opportunity of having a school on their own doorstep. People like John Wodwarde who, in his will of 1535, instructed his wife Agnes to send their children to school 'and see them set forth' until they came to their lawful age. John Wodwarde owned a shop in Eye and at least one of his sons benefited from his education for Henry Wodwarde rose to be Bailiff in the town during the 1560s.⁽¹⁹⁾ Thomas Parmenter left a third of his house (should his heirs die) towards the maintenance of the schoolmaster, and Humphrey Busby was another benefactor of the school. He arranged for an endowment of 35s a year in 1540 for the maintenance of two scholars at Cambridge. The Busbies were a local

family and Humphrey had been born in Eye in 1511. He attended Trinity Hall where he gained his Bachelor of Law degree in the middle thirties. He was Eye's most eminent scholar - later to become Regius Professor of Law at Trinity - and, although we cannot know for certain where he attended school, it is quite likely that he was one of Eye School's most successful old boys. Certainly he consistently displayed a special interest in it and over thirty years later (in 1571) founded a scholarship at Gonville & Caius for which preference was to be given to scholars from Eye School.⁽²⁰⁾

The middle years of the 1530s seem to have been relatively peaceful ones for the school and the only reference to it occurs about 1537 when 'Sir Tornor' (both priest and Bachelor of Arts) was schoolmaster. Richard Thurkettle's attention had been drawn to the very low stipend that the master received from the endowed lands which were clearly insufficient to live on.

All was lytyll ynow and to lityll to pay them ther wages wrote Thurkettle

consydreyng the Reparacons and owt Rents.⁽²¹⁾

None of the priest-schoolmasters had received more than £6 13s 4d for their wages whereupon, continued the vicar:

... because I herd them so sore compleyn I gave to them, that is to sey to the chirchewardens, 13s 4d toward ther wages.

The revenues of the endowed lands were first received by the churchwardens and then passed onto the schoolmaster and this offering, said Richard Thurkettle, could be verified by the churchwardens' accounts of that year, 1536-7.

This gift may temporarily have lightened poor Sir Tornor's load, but if it did he was living in a fool's paradise for it was not long after that that he lost his job altogether - a victim of the 'Protestant' group's re-emergence after an apparently ineffectual few years. He was

putt oute of service by Robert London and Thomas
Blow beyng baylyffs

and one of these, Richard Thurkettle noted gloomily, was also a churchwarden. (This would be Robert London who was churchwarden in 1536-7.)⁽²²⁾

Thomas Blow was especially hostile to the school's original ecclesiastical connections and, after he had succeeded in ousting Sir Tornor, he actually destroyed the school's first licence. According to Richard Thurkettle, he

cutte yt in sunder & made meashes of it for a Tayler.
(This has a certain ring of authenticity about it for, although Thomas Blow's own occupation is not recorded, at least three other members of his family are described as drapers or woollen drapers and therefore an association with tailoring may not be unlikely.)⁽²³⁾

If this renewed 'Protestant' activity was an attempt by Thomas Blow, Robert London and their confederates to rid the school once and for all of its Catholic associations, at first sight it did not succeed for only a year or two later the ex-Prior of the dissolved monastery of Eye was acting as temporary schoolmaster.⁽²⁴⁾ However, we have to be careful here, for William Hadley is an enigmatic figure in Eye history. As Prior he reigned over a Benedictine house that was torn by Lutheran influences and, although twenty years later during the reign of Queen Mary he was described as a good Catholic, his early association with the seat of radical Protestantism, Gonville Hall, may well hint at Lutheran sympathies. (Dr. Rougham of Bury was similarly described during the Marian regime as 'an honest and catholic man' even though he had been openly preaching Lutheran doctrines at Oxford in the late twenties.) Even assuming any degree of doctrinal consistency throughout William Hadley's life (an assumption it would be foolish to make) we simply do not know which side of the theological fence he stood, and his appointment as schoolmaster offers us no clear indication of the school's

temporary doctrinal position during this particular stage of its history. However, if it was the case that William Hadley - having been cast out into the world and badly needing a job - was the person who replaced Sir Tornor, then he would almost certainly be the candidate of the 'Protestant' faction. And if we take into account the fact that at least two more laymen were schoolmasters between now and 1547, this does certainly suggest the partial success of the 'Protestants' in Eye.

Control of the school seems to have depended largely on who held power in each successive year and power in Eye at this time resided mainly in the offices of bailiff and churchwarden. Once elected, these officers could manipulate the school accordingly, as clearly shown by the behaviour of Thomas Blow during his bailiffship.

The two laymen who served as schoolmaster during the 1540s were Master Williams and Master Brodbancke, both of whom held the degree of Master of Arts. Those who advocated a secular base for the school were evidently every bit as conscious as their opponents of the necessity for a high level of education in the town. During all the political and religious upheavals of the school there is never any suggestion of a lowering of academic standards.

In 1547, however, there was a dramatic lowering of standards - in fact, a complete standstill - for in this year the school found itself devoid of any master. Perhaps the general uncertainty attending the change of monarch (this problem occurred during the first year of Edward VI's reign) led to a re-emergence of hostilities which paralysed the functioning of the school. Whatever the reason, for a period between 1547 and 1548 'they hade neyther prest nor scolemaster' in the town. (These are the words of Richard Thurkettle and it may be that his use of the word 'they' rather than 'we' implies a loss of involvement with the school, which he would undoubtedly have felt if its affairs were now being conducted by

the radicals of Eye, people with whom he shared not one scrap of conviction.)⁽²⁵⁾

The 1548 Chantry Certificate confirms the absence of a schoolmaster for it was drawn up at precisely that time:

And the seyde scoole hath contynued tyll Michaelmas ... saving that the same Scoole was voide of a scoole Maister sumtyme, by the space of halfe a yere, Bicause they coulde nott be provided of oone In that tyme, and For the same cause yt is nowe Voyde. ⁽²⁶⁾

The Certificate records that the money for the schoolmaster's wages, which it puts at £5 12s 1d, 'the Inhabitanτες of the Towne of Eye doo take to their owne use'.

The lack of a schoolmaster may, of course, have been the result of a genuine difficulty, but it is also possible that it was part of an elaborate ploy to avoid money or property, which the town considered its own, from passing into the hands of the crown. And, in fact, shortly after this the school was once more functioning again, this time with Robert Shene as schoolmaster. This appointment was made by the churchwardens, and it is notable that one of them was Thomas Blow and that the new man was another layman.⁽²⁷⁾ Richard Thurkettle emphasised the fact that, although he was a layman, he was appointed

to be bothe scolemaster and parische clerke.⁽²⁸⁾

There could be two explanations to the fact that Robert Shene was acting in the capacity of parish clerk. The simpler one would be that, in fact, the schoolmaster's function by this period - in the early years of Edward's reign - was now solidly a secular one, but that the old guard, notably Richard Thurkettle, insisted on clinging onto the original notion that it was primarily clerical in approach. The other possibility is the one we have already come across: that, in many parts of the county, parishes had become a law unto themselves and were appointing laymen to hold ecclesiastical positions in order to prevent the crown from receiving the benefits that it was felt

should accrue to the locality.⁽²⁹⁾ If this were the case, then the 'Protestants' of Eye were continuing their tricky game even after the temporary closure of the school, and Robert Shene was indeed functioning both as schoolmaster and parish clerk.

In any event, by this time Richard Thurkettle seems to have lost all influence in the town, and this may account for the sense of weary impotence with which he noted events in his book. If he no longer commanded any respect or authority in such matters, this would suggest that the traditionalists in Eye had lost considerable ground, and, of course, would be in tune with the times for by now the country was beginning to feel the more extreme Protestant influences of Protector Somerset's government. The new reign would have given a tremendous boost to the fortunes of the radicals and, secure in their new confidence, they arranged the appointment of yet another lay-schoolmaster.

Robert Shene was not richly rewarded, however, in his new vocation since he received only £4 a year, and it was on this meagre salary that he managed to survive in the post for five years until 1553. (Richard Thurkettle said that the £4 was 'to serve bothe turnes', by which he presumably meant the offices of both schoolmaster and parish clerk.)

In 1553, the churchwardens replaced Robert Shene and hired another layman to take over the school. John Todd was the fourth layman to hold the post and his appointment was marked by an enormous and quite inexplicable increase in salary - from £4 a year to £10 a year.⁽³⁰⁾ The new rate compared much more realistically with the average pay of schoolmasters at the time since it was the salary adopted by most of the free grammar schools founded during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁽³¹⁾ The schoolmaster's salary had been a movable feast during the school's chequered history. In the 1530s it was about £6 13s 4d, but by 1548 it had been reduced to £5 12s 1d. It was then further reduced to a mere

£4. By the time it leapt to £10 in 1553 and came more in line with other salaries, it was already felt by some to be falling behind and was an amount being criticised as inadequate in view of the general inflation of the period. Hugh Latimer pointed out that £10 a year was hardly enough to allow a man to buy himself books or give a drink to his neighbours.⁽³²⁾ And when Edward VI ordered all cathedrals in 1547 to keep a free school, he fixed the masters' salaries at £13 6s 8d a year, with the additional benefit of a house. (An usher received half that amount, including a chamber.)⁽³³⁾ In these new Edwardian foundations, salaries tended to rise but there was no standard amount and they varied from £10 to as much as £20.

Even so, with a salary of £10 the Eye schoolmaster was considerably better off than the old chantry priests had been. (The stipends of chantry priests only a few years before in Gloucestershire and Somerset were mostly between £5 and £8 a year, and some were even lower.)⁽³⁴⁾ In the days when Eye was not sure if its schoolmaster was merely an educationalist or a chantry priest, the salary had been much more in line with these and the sudden dramatic rise in salary that coincided with John Todd's appointment marked the final severing of any of the old ecclesiastical associations. The young king had been on the throne for six years and the Protestant cause had made considerable advances during that time. The new religion was being consolidated everywhere and the future looked settled. It must have seemed to the 'Protestants' of Eye that England had at last repudiated Catholicism and could look forward with confidence to a future unfettered by its paraphernalia. Their school had finally been rescued from its old Catholic associations and the new secular age, with the borough fully in control, was symbolised by the dramatic increase in salary.

But history has a strange way of dealing out the unexpected and who, among those rather satisfied borough officials, could have guessed that by the time July came round their young Protestant monarch would be dead and the country thrown in turmoil once more?

In the event, John Todd's appointment, which had marked such an assured future, came to an abrupt end in less than three years. In many ways he had done well to last that long, but the intervening period had been another one of bitter in-fighting.

Queen Mary's reign had given the necessary impetus to the Eye conservatives and they were ceaseless in their pressure to restore the school, and especially the schoolmaster, to its original function. But the bailiffs would not budge. Finally, and we must suppose in desperation, the 'Catholics' went straight to the top and sought the assistance of the Bishop himself. This was now John Hopton, an ardent Catholic and confessor to the Queen, and he wrote several times to the bailiffs of Eye urging them to replace their lay schoolmaster with a priest. His letters were ignored.

On 26th September 1556, he wrote again, indicating that his patience was now at an end. (The co-signatories of the letter were Sir Edward Waldegrave and William Cordall, two Suffolk men whom Queen Mary had appointed to her council in gratitude for their loyalty to her at the time of her accession.)

In this letter, the Bishop recalls that he has written several times to the bailiffs enjoining them to provide 'a convenyent priests service' according to the foundation of certain lands given for that purpose, but he understands that

yow neverthelesse do not dispose yorselves to exequit suche my mocon accordynglye. Beyng Appoynted in comyssyon with thes for the reformacon of suche abuse as we shuld heroff in the Countres of Suffolk and Norfolk we have thought good to call yow before us aswell for yor contempte and disobedience aforeseid as also to here whan ye can objecte to the contrarye of the seid letters. And therfor commande yow and

every of yow by force of the seide commyssyon to appere personallye befor us at Boreleye by Long Mylford on Saturnesdaye next beyng the iiide^{de} daye of Octobre by eyght of the clocke of the said day, And that yow bryng with yow all such evydences and writtyngs to wiche the foundacon of the prests servyces afforeseid and any such landes as yowe have her to fore employed to the use of the prestes and scolemastre as are remaynyng in yor handes or that yow can com bye. And this fayle not to do as yow wull answeere the contrary at yor perells. (35)

This rather threatening letter was addressed to the present bailiffs, John Thurkettle and William Thrower, and also included the names of Robert London, James Seman, Humphrey Knevet, Edward Torold, Robert Shene and Robert Thurston. These men must have been local office-holders at the time (perhaps some of them were the current churchwardens) and their names had clearly been passed onto the authorities by an aggrieved local Catholic - in all likelihood, Richard Thurkettle, probably via Sir Thomas Cornwallis of Brome who was by now in the service of the Queen at court and was to prove an especially useful ally.

This list of names represented a substantial part of the 'Protestant' faction of Eye. William Thrower and James Seman were prominent members of the group: as churchwardens, they had been involved in the non-payment of obits and also in the sales of church plate during the reign of Edward VI. (Richard Thurkettle always refers to these two in his book in particularly hostile terms.) Robert London was another who sold off church plate and he was also one of the bailiffs who had been responsible for the removal of Sir Tornor, the last priest-schoolmaster in 1536. (Later, his son, Thomas London, was to refuse to pay tithes during his period of office as chamberlain in 1557-8.) Robert Shene was the layman who took over the schoolmaster's post in 1547. His name is also mentioned in the accounts relating to the sales of church plate and, when he was chamberlain in the early forties, he (along with his partner, Thomas Blow) refused to pay the tithes due to the vicar at that time. Edward Torold was the churchwarden who initially hired

Robert Shene to be schoolmaster and he too omitted to pay any obits when he was churchwarden. The name of Thomas Blow, one of Eye's leading radicals, is absent from this list and, since his name does not appear in any of the Eye records after about 1551, it is quite likely that he was by this time dead.

These, then, were some of the men to whom the Bishop addressed his letter. It was delivered to the bailiffs of Eye on Michaelmas Day 1556 and evidently conveyed sufficient sense of threat to gain the immediate consent of the dissidents to its demands. (In any case, by this time the tenor of the new Queen's reign was beginning to filter through to the country and the burnings for heresy had begun the previous year.) Despite their earlier bravado and their refusal to respond to the Bishop's letters, on this occasion they 'consented to have a prest to be the scolemaster' and they delivered their reply to that effect the following Wednesday. It was taken personally to the Bishop at Long Melford by Robert Shene, Robert London, John Thurkettle and William Thrower.⁽³⁶⁾ In this letter, they

signyfyed on to hym what ordre he had taken with them
and how thei had agreed and consented to his honest
request.

They asked the Bishop to discharge them from their personal appearance before the commission and they undertook

thei shuld be no furdre combred upon the promyse for
the performance of the ordre beffore seyd.

They probably were allowed to forego their appearance at the commission on 3rd October, but a week later, on 10th October, they attended personally at Melford Hall where the whole matter was thoroughly investigated by William Cordall. Cordall subsequently reported back to the Bishop and in his report described the meeting between himself and the rebels of Eye.⁽³⁷⁾

It may please your Lordship tunderstonde that the seide parties have in your absens this present daye ben before me and shewed me ther evidence, with declaracon of all circumstances apperteynyng to the mater. And as up on consideracon of the same it may be thowght that the cheff intent and purpose as well off thois persons wiche gave landes, as also of thois that gave monye towards the purchase of the seide Town landes, was to meyneteyne a prest to praie for them in the same town, So it apperit on to me that ther was a meanyng in them also That the same prest suld be a Scolemaster and lernyd in latyn tunng to teache and trayne up the yowught of the towne in good lernyng and vertu, And accordyngly thexperiens theroff hat hyther to ben. Wherfor knowyng your lordships pleasure to be, and it is most Agreeabill with Reason, to restore the thyng to his former lawdable and right nature, I have with the assents off them and of the Compleynants travellyd with them and ordred the mater in this Forme: That is to sey, that from tyme to tyme such a prest shuld be chosen by the vicar and Balyves off the town for the tyme beyng as shuld be habill to teache Grammar there, and none at all to be chosen as Scole Master except he be also a prest, with wiche myn order for asmoche as thei seme well satisfyed And have promysed to putt the same in execucon with all convenient Expedicon, and have also grawnted that thei wull conferre the hool yerely revenewes of all suche landes as hertofore have bene at anye tyme employed to the meyntenance of the Prest and Scolemaster his service Upon suche as shall here Afftre supplie the same Romes to thende he may be the more wylllyng to praye for them and hable to teache ther Children.

In view of this agreement, and finding 'this good conformyte' in them, Cordall asked the Bishop to pardon their former misdemeanours in the matter.

This was indeed a victory for traditionalism in Eye and, although the Eye dissidents who had travelled that day to Long Melford must have been heartily relieved to have been let off so lightly, it was nevertheless a marked defeat after nearly thirty years of struggle over who should run the school. Once more, a priest was to be installed and part of his function was 'to praye for them' in his original capacity as a chantry priest. It was, however, a sign of the changing times that a clear compromise was reached in the selection of this priest: no longer was such power solely in the hands of the church. Even in these days of restored Catholicism, the secular powers of the borough were not something to be lightly disregarded and in future the choice of the priest-

schoolmaster was to be the joint responsibility of the church, in the person of the vicar, and the borough, through its representatives, the bailiffs.

The borough acted quickly. John Todd was hastily removed following the trip to Long Melford and replaced by a more suitable person, though we do not know his name. (Here again is evidence that Richard Thurkettle tended only to note down those things which displeased him: he makes no mention of the new priest and such absence of comment can usually be taken to indicate approbation.)

The revenues from the school lands were once more to be used for a chantry purpose and it was at this time that these lands passed into the hands of a new tenant. John Chappell, a local husbandman, took them over at an annual rent of £11 (perhaps the new schoolmaster benefited from this increase in rent) and altogether a clean sweep was made. (38)

Richard Thurkettle's subsequent silence on the question of the school may well suggest that, from his point of view at least, all was now satisfactory and the school was functioning as he felt it should. The only other evidence we have concerning the school in these years of Mary also suggests that Eye was returning to those familiar pre-Reformation days with all the practices and processions attendant upon them. In his will, William Woodman (alias Webbe) left 26s 8d a year 'towardses the fynding of 2 Clerkes to serve in the sayd parish of Eye', as well as bread, cheese and beer which was to be distributed to the poor on those days set aside to remember the town's fifteenth-century benefactors. The town was reverting to the old Catholic habits almost as if nothing had changed.

But in reality, the clock could not be put back, however much certain people may have wished it. William Woodman Webbe was not unmindful of the uncertainties of the times he lived in for, although his will clearly indicates the old pre-Reformation patterns

had re-established themselves in Eye, it was actually drawn up two days after the death of their greatest advocate, Queen Mary. The news could only just have reached the town and, conscious of the upheaval to come, William Woodman Webbe judiciously added the proviso of the law-abiding Englishman, 'as the lawes of the realme doe permytt'.

Shortly after this, some of the land supporting the school changed tenancy again. Early in 1559, Thomas Harrold of Scole in Norfolk was granted part of the land originally given by John Fiske for ten years at an annual rent of 36s 8d. At about the same time, the vicar, the bailiffs and eighteen other leading inhabitants of the town made a detailed survey of exactly which lands John Fanner had given to support the priest-schoolmaster, and they renewed John Chappell's tenure of these lands for a period of twenty-one years at a rent of £10. (This was a reduction of £1 on the previous rent, which may be accounted for in that one meadow and one hill were excluded from the re-negotiated agreement.)⁽³⁹⁾

By the time of Elizabeth's succession, Richard Thurkettle was beginning to show signs of the illness from which he died two years later and he seems to have quietly withdrawn from the struggle over the school. This means that evidence is singularly sparse at this period and we can only assume that the school's history followed its usual pattern and that, within a year or two of the change of monarch, its policies were once more reflecting what was happening in the country as a whole.

However, the vicar of Eye did not forget his lifelong interest in education when it came to making his will in 1560 and he left £4 to be divided between two Eye scholars, William Mallows and Thomas Smyth, towards their studies at Cambridge. The absence of bequest to either the school or the master, in which he had taken such an ardent interest, no doubt reflects his attitude to the current tide of events.

Five years after the vicar's death, in 1566, the borough drew up an entirely new set of constitutions in which the school featured prominently.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Once again, the civil authorities were responsible for its running. We know from hindsight that the see-saw of Protestant and Catholic regimes had finally ground to a halt and that the future of the school now lay firmly and securely in secular hands but it is doubtful whether the Eye 'Protestants' felt that much confidence. They had grown used to sudden changes in fortune and, with a young unmarried woman on the throne, now in her middle thirties and with no sign of an heir, there was no reason to think that the present reign would be any more secure than the previous two.

In the 1566 constitutions, we can detect through inference some of the recent problems which had occurred in the running of the school and in the choice of its master, and the new constitutions attempted to clarify several hazy areas. It was ordered, for example, that the entire revenues of the school lands should be employed only for the maintenance of 'a learned Man apt to teach a Grammer School'. This put paid once and for all to the notion that the schoolmaster might have any other (particularly religious) function. It also ensured that the school's revenues would not be diverted to any other purpose as had previously happened in 1547 when they had been put to the 'use of the town'.

In future, the suitable candidate was to be nominated by the agreement of the majority of the feoffees of the school lands as well as the 'most Substantial & honest Inhabitants' of the town. This reduced the authority of the feoffees and increased the involvement of the borough, for those substantial and honest inhabitants would be the Twelve and Twenty-four. More significantly, it completely eliminated the influence of the vicar who, for the past ten years since the Bishop's interference in 1556, had been instrumental in choosing the schoolmaster. However, in the excellent tradition of

Elizabethan compromise, the influence of the church was not entirely diminished since it fell to the churchwardens, along with the bailiffs, to take over the somewhat thankless task of general oversight of the school. (Although by this period the function of churchwardens was diminishing in its ecclesiastical overtones and becoming simply another extension of borough bureaucracy.) Any of the churchwardens or bailiffs who refused to accept this particular burden of looking after the school was to be fined forty shillings. None of the churchwardens' accounts survives for sixteenth-century Eye, but the early seventeenth-century accounts demonstrate that the involvement of the churchwardens with the school was of the least elevated nature and seemed to be concerned largely with general repairs.⁽⁴¹⁾ They paid out 4d for a latch for the schoolhouse door and 42s 10d for unspecified work around the schoolhouse. Humphrey Burnett was engaged in 'daubinge the Walles about the Schoolehouse & yard' and 2s 8d was spent 'For digging: 2 loades of clay & carrienge to the Schoolehouse yarde'. Other payments included 2s 6d 'for a plancke & mendinge the gate to the Schoolehouse yard' and 2s 4d for 'digging a Pitt in the Schoolehouse yard'. Windows were evidently the responsibility of the borough rather than the churchwardens, at least until 1653 when it was ordered that, in future, the master and the usher must repair any broken windows at their own expense.⁽⁴²⁾

Several references were made in the 1566 constitutions about the duties of the schoolmaster. He should 'diligently Attend such Scholars as shall be comitted to him', although these scholars were to be able to read Latin and English well and distinctly before they came to him 'to learn their Grammer and Latin Tongue only'. The master was not to teach them to write, except 'at his own Will & Liberty'. This reflects an anxiety that the school should not be reduced to an elementary status. Until the appointment of an usher at the school towards the end of the century, there is no record of

any provision in the town for elementary education. Presumably, boys learned the rudiments of reading and writing as they had always done, at the feet of local clerics in an informal manner.

Under the new constitutions, the schoolmaster was not free to resign without first giving six months' notice to the bailiffs and churchwardens. Conversely, the town on their part could not remove him from his post without six months' warning either. He was at no time to be absent from the school, apart from the usual holidays which generally included the greater festivals of the church as well as any more local ceremonies (which were probably for the most part discontinued by this time). Some schools had longer periods of holiday, such as Eton which had fifteen days at Christmas, twelve at Easter and a three-week intermission from Ascension Day until Corpus Christi. At Wootton-under-Edge, holidays at the grammar school lasted for two weeks at Christmas, two at Easter, one at Whitsun and six weeks from 1st August to 14th September. Often, however, the pupils remained at their schools to continue studying.⁽⁴³⁾ If the Eye schoolmaster wished to be absent for any other reason, then special permission was required from the bailiffs and churchwardens and he was to arrange for 'a Sufficient deputy ... to have regard of his Scholars'. Part of his duty was to make sure that all the pupils from the school attended church every Sunday and every holy day and that, in the church, they conducted themselves 'decently & orderly'. A special part of the church, in the north side of the chancel, was put aside for the master and the scholars. This practice was confirmed in the next century by an order of the Town Council which stipulated that

whereas the Master of the Free Schoole hath antiently satt on the North side of the Chauncell with his Scollers, It is thought fitt and ordered that the said Master of the Free Schoole shall continue his seat here with his scollars on that side of the Chancell, and no other Inhabitant to sitt there amongst the said scollers.⁽⁴⁴⁾

The 1566 constitutions demanded that the schoolmaster be a man of considerable talent and, apart from being an able teacher and a Latin scholar, he was also expected to possess musical and dramatic abilities. Part of his duty was

to the best of his Power ... maintain the Quire when
Service shall be Sung in the Church

and also to produce a play every year. He must

learn & instruct his Scholars to play one Comedy or
Tragedy in some apt place of the Town whereunto every
Inhabitant may have Access

and, in order to save unnecessary expense, the bailiffs and churchwardens undertook to provide

all such necessary furniture as shall Appertain to the
Setting forth of such Comedy or Tragedy.

This annual play became a regular feature of life in post-Reformation Eye, presumably replacing the old Corpus Christi play, and it is recorded in the town accounts that ten shillings was given to the schoolmaster 'when the scollers played' at Whitsuntide.⁽⁴⁵⁾ With the loss of so many of the festivals and processions of the mediaeval church, the school's annual play must have offered a spot of welcome colour in the comparatively drab life of the church's post-Reformation calendar.

In return for all these duties 'well & truly performed', the master was to receive £10 a year 'for his said pains'. This salary was to be paid by the churchwardens twice a year, at the Feast of the Annunciation and at Michaelmas.

During these middle years of the century, there is no record of where the school was held, but in the latter part of the century the old hall which once belonged to the Guild of St Mary (and was known locally as Upston's) was converted into a suitable school building.⁽⁴⁶⁾ The guildhall was a fifteenth-century two-storied building. (It can still be seen in present-day Eye, together with some of its original oak carving, including a corner post bearing the figure of Gabriel.)

The move to this building secured the school once and for all as a separate institution valid in its own right and, no longer torn apart by rival interests, it became a well-established and important feature of life in Elizabethan Eye. Anne Bettles, a widow, left instructions for her son John 'to be well and honestly brought up at school' until he was nineteen years old. William Herring, an influential man in local affairs, showed particular concern in his will about the education of his only son Thomas (he had five daughters). Thomas was to complete his schooling and then continue his studies at university and the Inns of Court or Chancery until he was twenty-three. If he did not 'follow his study and book' until that age, then his inheritance was to be withheld.

Eye's most successful scholar, Professor Humphrey Busby, who had granted an endowment in 1540 for two scholars to study at Cambridge, continued his interest in the school and in 1571 he founded a scholarship at Gonville & Caius worth £40 to which preference was to be given to boys from Eye School.⁽⁴⁷⁾

During the 1570s, in fact, some of the school's successes begin to be recorded. Nicholas Woorledge, who came from Eye, attended for four years before going on in 1573 to Gonville & Caius. He was fourteen at the time and was given the fourth lower cubicle in Gonville Court. William Flacke, son of a husbandman from nearby Mellis, went to the same college in 1579 when he was seventeen. (He was afterwards to become a Jesuit priest.) One Norfolk gentleman, John Holdych of Ranworth, which was over thirty miles away, was clearly satisfied with the education that Eye School provided for he sent his three sons to study there under Mr. Popson. Henry, Richard and Thomas all continued their studies at Cambridge, at the ages of nineteen, eighteen and sixteen respectively. Clement Dawbney, son of another Norfolk gentleman, and William Pretymen from Suffolk were two other Eye scholars who went onto Cambridge.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Eye School was attracting the sons of the well-to-do from a wide region of East Anglia. This is not surprising when we remember that by no means every town had its grammar school. There was no school at Bury St Edmunds, for example, and this was a considerably larger town than Eye. (3,000 houseling people were reported there in the 1540s when Eye's entire population was probably less than 600.) Bury's lack was commented upon at the end of the forties:

And Further theare is no scoole nor other Lyke Divise
founded wythin the seide Townne, or wythin 20 myles of
ytt, for the vertuous educacyon and bringing upp of
yowth ...

and this was despite the 'greate nombre of yowth' in the town.⁽⁴⁹⁾

In fact, Eye was probably the nearest school to Bury and, although it may seem odd to find a flourishing grammar school in a much smaller and certainly less significant town, we must remember that there is specific evidence of no more than a dozen grammar schools in the entire county before 1548.⁽⁵⁰⁾ No wonder so many bitter battles were fought in Eye over their school for, if nothing else, it probably enhanced the town's reputation more than any other single factor in the county of Suffolk. It represented in that sense the status equivalent in the sixteenth century that the church tower had been in the fifteenth.

And as its academic reputation was established, further bequests ensured its future, including Mr. Mallows' outstanding legacy of £200 which was to buy lands to support two or three scholars at Cambridge.⁽⁵¹⁾ By the last decade of the sixteenth century, it was felt necessary to appoint an usher to assist the master in his duties. Lands to maintain such a post had been given in 1593 by a Norfolk gentleman, Francis Kent, and the revenues were to go towards finding 'a sufficient usher' who would

teach freely all such children of Eye, Horham, Allington
and Bedfield as should be put into school to learn
grammar and also to teach them all to write. (52)

This would extend the school's teaching into the elementary as well as the secondary field and the first usher to be appointed was William Lambert. (He may possibly have been the son of George Lambert, who had previously been in charge of Magdalene.) He was instructed to teach grammar to the pupils until they had learned all the English rules ('Propria que maribus', 'Que genus aut flexum', 'As in presenti' etc.) as well as to teach them to write.⁽⁵³⁾

William Lambert had been recommended by Edward Honing, the MP for Eye, as

a very honest fit and sufficient man for the performauce
and execucon of the sayd ushershippe

and in selecting him the feoffees of the school lands expressed the wish that he would for his part

dutyfully Carefully & paynefully discharge and execute
the offyce ... according to the Comendacon made of him
& in discharge of his owne Conscience ...

His salary was not specified and he was appointed to the post on condition that he conducted himself

as becometh an honest & discreet man which God graunt
he may Longe doe to the good educacon of those children
that shalbe comitted to his charge wherby they may
become good and profitable membres in the Comon Weale
to the Comforte of there parentes & freindes & to the
glorye of our god Almyghtye. (54)

William Lambert, though, did not fulfil his early promise and in less than a year a list of orders was drawn up by Mr. Lomax (himself an ex-schoolmaster of Eye and currently a feoffee) for the approval of the other feoffees.⁽⁵⁵⁾ From this draft list of instructions, it would appear that William Lambert had contravened some of the original conditions of his appointment. Evidently, he had been teaching children from towns other than those specified, for the first instruction to him emphasises that he must not teach any scholars

coming owt of any other towne than the fower privileged
by the will of the Founder ...

Nor were any scholars to be kept at the school without the prior consent of the master. Only the master and the feoffees were to assess the progress of those scholars for whom the usher was responsible, and he was to be able to write 'fair' both the secretary and -roman hands and to be 'diligent to teache his scollers to write well'. Those scholars who wished it should also be taught figures and accounting by him.

The same draft list of instructions also suggests that William Lambert perhaps did not respect as much as he might the position and authority of the master (who by now was probably Arthur Hopwoode)⁽⁵⁶⁾ for he is ordered to

followe & use such methode & order in teaching grammer and such howers for his schollers cuming to & going from the schole & for plaiyenge as the said mayster shall directe.

The usher is also reminded that he must

behave him selfe alwayes as underteacher and inferior and be dependent upon the master without prejudicing, hindering or 'cussing' him; in fact, he must in no wise discourage, oppose or disturb the master but be always an assistance, ease and comfort to him. If he observes these instructions, then it will be to the advantage of the school, but if the good intentions of the founder fail to be carried out then confusion and dispute will undoubtedly arise in the school and as a consequence the entire town will be harmed.

The fear of contention which runs through this document reflects not only the sixteenth century dislike of disorder but also an anxiety much nearer home. The leading inhabitants of Eye must have been highly conscious of the problems encountered by their fathers and grandfathers when the town was torn apart by disputes and faction fighting. And it is possible that something of that anarchy lurked not too far beneath the apparently smooth and successful surface of the school even now in the 1590s. Those responsible were jumpy about

William Lambert's initiatives, his confidence and his apparent disregard of authority. In the previous decade, an old scholar of Eye, William Flacke, had subsequently trained at the College of Douai, gone from there to the English College at Rome, and in June 1585 been admitted into the Jesuit Society.⁽⁵⁷⁾ Mr. Lomax, who drew up the list of instructions for William Lambert, had himself been schoolmaster for a time (round about 1590) and he was a well-known local recusant.

Catholic influences still haunted the school, there was still the possibility of sectarian conflict, and it is not surprising to find those responsible for the school in such a state of nervousness about further dissension. Education in the sixteenth century was expected to confirm society and encourage attitudes of conformity and stability. Those privileged enough to benefit from it were expected to become 'good and profitable membres in the Comon Weale', a condition that would not only bring comfort to their parents and friends but would redound 'to the glorie of our god Almyghtye'.⁽⁵⁸⁾

The purpose of education was to perpetuate social values, not to question them, and whoever controlled the school would be in a position to instil the 'correct' attitude. It is in the light of this that we can better understand the battle for patronage that took place between the conservatives and radicals at Eye, for underneath it lay the much wider question of just where the country was going. The future is always in the hands of the young and the continuing conflict over the grammar school at Eye was but a microcosm of a nation enduring at one and the same time the death pangs and birth pangs of its process of transformation.

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2. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f4
3. ibid, f8v (punctuation, abbreviations and figures modernised)
4. Prior Richard Norwich occurs 1492, 1493 and 1500.
Prior Belinges occurs in 1493 as a monk and in 1506 as Prior.
ed A. Jessopp, Visitations of the Diocese of Norwich AD 1492-
1532, Camden Society, New Series, Vol 43 (1888) 40-41.
William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, Vol 3 (London, 1821) 402.
Wills of John Mason (1500) and William Gale (1506): see appendix.
5. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f21v
6. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/3 (20), Extract from
Survey Book of the Manor of Netherhall
7. ibid
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/13 (21)
8. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f22
9. Nicholas Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages (London,
1973) 146
10. '... if they may there lernyng not lettid ...'
11. Nicholas Orme, op cit, 160, gives two examples of octogenarian
schoolmasters who were still teaching. He also notes that, of
forty-eight schoolmasters known to have served in the endowed
schools of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Somerset between
the 1380s and 1540, fourteen are recorded as moving on to
rectories and vicarages, which shows that this sort of movement
was not unknown amongst schoolmasters.
12. Orme, op cit, 154
13. Orme, op cit, 162, quoting Elyot, The Boke Named the Governour
14. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f21v
15. VCH, II, 30
16. In his letter discussing the problem, Thomas Golding described
himself as 'principal feoffee' in the school lands. However,
as he surrendered his involvement in 1532 in favour of Richard
Thurkettle, his letter clearly pre-dates that year. Richard
Thurkettle was inducted to the parish of Eye in 1529, and is
most likely the 'Sir Richard', described as his 'nephew', that
he refers to. This would put the letter between these two dates.
17. Orme, op cit, 150

18. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f8v
19. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/4 (3), Schedule of Ancient Deeds and Documents, entry for 1569
20. John Venn, Biographical History of Gonville and Caius College 1349-1897, Vol 1 (Cambridge, 1897) 53
VCH, II, 338
21. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20
Richard Thurkettle here refers to 'them' and 'they', but it is unlikely to have been the case that more than one priest was acting as schoolmaster. He may have been referring collectively to past schoolmasters (especially in view of the rapid turnover of them) or he may in his general comments be including other chaplains, chantry priests or clerks in minor orders.
22. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20
23. ibid, f22
24. ibid, f21v
25. ibid, f20
26. A. F. Leach, op cit, 213
Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 12 (1906) 31
27. The other churchwardens for that year were John Whetingham, John Gislingham and Edward Torold.
28. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20
29. VCH, II, 30
30. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20
31. Orme, op cit, 158.
As well as a salary, schoolmasters were usually provided with a house or a chamber situated beside or above the schoolroom. We have no details about the domestic accommodation at Eye school.
32. Orme, op cit, 159
33. ed W. H. Frere & W. M. Kennedy, Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation 1536-1575, Alcuin Club Collections, Vol 2 (1910) 139
34. In 1548
Orme, op cit, 159-160
35. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f35
36. ibid, f35
37. ibid, f36v (punctuation and abbreviations modernised)
38. ibid, f1

39. ibid, ff17v, 19-20, 16
40. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/B/10/2c, Copy of Eye Borough Constitutions, 1566, entry entitled 'Order for the School'
41. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/Q1/2, 3, 4, 5
42. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/3 (4)
43. Orme, op cit, 132-3
44. Historical Manuscripts Commission, Rep. X, The Manuscripts of the Corporation of Eye in the County of Suffolk, 534.
(This was in 1650.)
45. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, entries for 1599
46. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/K/1/15
47. John Venn, op cit, 53
48. John Venn, op cit, 74, 102, 111, 120, 125, 142
49. A. F. Leach, op cit, 216
50. VCH, II, 302
51. This was in the early seventeenth century.
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/1, Will of Mr. Mallows
52. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, f29
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M4/1/3 (4)
53. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, f29
54. ibid, f29
55. ibid, f29
56. He was mentioned as schoolmaster in 1593.
Norwich Diocesan Registry, VIS/2, 1593, Visitation by Bishop Edmund Scambler, Visitation Book, entry for Eye. Mr. Johnston had been schoolmaster in the 1580s, see Eye Parish Register (SRO Ipswich, FB 135/D1/1, entries for 1583 and 1585)
57. John Venn, op cit, 102
58. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, f29

Chapter 5

A PARLOUS WORLD

The Development of English Protestantism

... what a world is this; it was not so in your father's day. Ye may see here a parlous world. They will have no pilgrimages; they will not we should pray to saints or fast, or do any good deeds; Our Lord have mercy on us. (1)

It took less than two years for the spark which was ignited at Wittenberg to reach England and early in 1519 Luther's books were arriving in this country (being admired, Erasmus reported to him later that year, by certain very great people in England). Although an Oxford bookseller recorded the sale of more than a dozen of the books between January and December 1520, the majority of the men who led the first generation of English Protestants came from Cambridge and it was here that the early Lutheran circle, known as the 'White Horse' group, met together to discuss the new German doctrines. By the end of 1520 or the beginning of 1521, Cambridge had seen the first burnings of Lutheran books. (2)

East Anglia, then, was exposed very early to the new ideas and, while accepting Professor Dickens' warning⁽³⁾ that 'Reformation history cannot be converted into a mere shadow of economic and social history', the spread of the German doctrines was undoubtedly facilitated by those lines of communication already laid down by economic factors - the international connections of the European merchant class, the east coast ports and the local circuits of trade. The Bishop of Norwich acknowledged this in 1530 when he wrote that he was

accombred with such as keepeth and readeth these erroneous books in England and believe and give credence to the same ... the gentlemen and the commenty be not greatly infect(ed) but merchants and such that hath their abiding not far from the sea. (4)

The Bishop might protest that the gentry and the common people were little infected with heresy, but there were certain pockets of his diocese where this was clearly not the case and where receptivity to Lutheran doctrines was more apparent. One such was Eye.

This small, sleepy and not very important community was hardly renowned as a trading centre, was by no means part of a major trading route, was over thirty miles from the major ports of Lowestoft or Felixstowe and was fifty miles from the Protestant groups at Cambridge. Why then did it find itself susceptible to the new continental doctrines?

Its geographical position was significant in only one respect: it was part of the Waveney Valley, and this was the area distinguished for its Lollard activity in the previous century. In Bishop Alnwick's purge on Lollard heretics between the years 1428-1431, the Waveney Valley produced the largest number of heresy prosecutions recorded. In fact, this particular prosecution represented the second largest in the entire country between 1414 and 1522, with over forty abjurations, ten purgations and three burnings.⁽⁵⁾

In the early sixteenth century, the old Lollard centres, as well as the trade routes, played a significant part in the dissemination of English Protestantism, for had not the Lollards been preaching in much the same spirit as Luther? And Eye had not escaped the Alnwick purge of the previous century.

The exploits of their own Lollard activist, Nicholas Canon, had been the talking point of Eye in the 1430s and, as one of the forty who had abjured, Nicholas had kept his head. A dead Nicholas would have been mourned as a fool or a martyr, but alive he was potentially a much more dangerous prospect. Following a period in prison so that he should not 'infect the flock with the venom and power of heresies', he performed his public penance around the cloisters of the cathedral at Norwich.⁽⁶⁾ He then disappeared from history. Presumably, he

returned to his native Eye to continue his trade and pursue his own spiritual search. Processing around a cathedral cloister as a penitentiary, however ignominious, does not necessarily make a man change his mind about the nature of God, but in an intolerant age it might make him a little more circumspect about expressing those ideas. The absence of any further historical evidence about Nicholas does suggest he cultivated a certain diplomacy and was rather less ostentatious in his derision of the mass, the ceremonies, the processions and paraphernalia of the church. He was certainly not alone in remaining silent. Bishop Alnwick's vigorous and effective persecution throughout the Diocese of Norwich was one of the few in that century to have any degree of success and a considerable time was to elapse before any further persecutions took place there.⁽⁷⁾

The extent of Lollard sympathy in Eye at that time is unknown, but Nicholas Canon is unlikely to have been its only proponent in an area so highly infected with heretical notions. His flamboyance resulted in attention from the authorities. Others may have embraced their religious beliefs in a quieter, more private and more cautious manner. And indeed subsequent evidence does suggest that Eye was quite considerably influenced by radical ideas, which would support Dr. Thomson's conclusions that such heresy survived in England in small communities, that the tradition was perpetuated within a family or a group of families and that there was a continuing tradition of underground heresy rather than new communities of heretics springing up.⁽⁸⁾

These underground heretics contented themselves with reading vernacular scriptures and other outlawed works in private; they conformed outwardly to church attendance but refused inwardly to accept the church's teachings. Lollardy became more concerned with self-preservation than with revolution, a fact which may have loosened the contacts between different groups but forged the links

within their immediate communities. Following the severity of the Alnwick persecutions, it was to be another sixty years before further cases of heresy were discovered in Eastern England.⁽⁹⁾

One case, early in the sixteenth century, demonstrates that Eye was one of those communities where the radical doctrines had not been allowed to fade away. Children and grandchildren absorbing family influences, the spread of attitudes and loyalties within a group of associated families, partners working in allied trades: all these provide fertile ground for the exchange of ideas. When heresy began to be overt again, in the last decade of the fifteenth century, some of the more courageous among them began to relax their outward conformity. A weaver in Eye, called Pope, stopped receiving Communion. He seems to have got away with this for several years, but in 1512 the authorities finally caught up with him. Foxe describes him as

an old man, which exercised weving in the towne of Eye
and refers to his 'quarel of the sacrament' because

in xiiii years before, he had not receaved the sacramente,
utterly abhorring the Popish kinde and sorte of
administration.

Unlike his predecessor, Nicholas Canon, this old man Pope refused to deny his beliefs and he was forced to pay the ultimate penalty. He was burnt at Norwich in 1512 - one of only seven people burnt in East Anglia between 1499 and 1512. He was the last recorded heretic in that region before the Reformation.⁽¹⁰⁾

Pope's death was as effective in silencing the local community as the Alnwick prosecutions of the previous century had been and it was to be twenty years before further cases of heresy occurred in Eye. But if outward conformity was the order of the day, this did not mean that radical ideas ceased to be nourished secretly. And there is here a considerable difference in the circumstances of the earlier heretics and those of the sixteenth century, for while the Lollard sympathisers closed ranks and tended to remain in isolated communities,

those open to Lutheran doctrines could look to the wider world for support and stimulation. Because of its history, Eye was a fertile ground for the ideas, books and people propounding the continental doctrines. There was more movement, more exchange of views, and especially was this the case in East Anglia with its itinerant preachers. Radical ideas were fanned and encouraged by the presence of such people: people like Thomas Bilney.

Bilney was a local man, born in Norfolk, and an influential Protestant preacher. He was a member of the Christian Brotherhood society, the group of young Cambridge men who had been influenced by Tyndale and who gathered many new adherents to Protestantism. In 1525, as a young man of thirty, Bilney was licensed to preach throughout the neighbouring Diocese of Ely, but there is evidence that he also preached elsewhere - including the Diocese of Norwich. He was twice thrown out of a Norwich pulpit by people who considered his views heretical and he is also recorded as arguing with a friar at Ipswich on the subject of venerating images.⁽¹¹⁾

His effect on people probably arose not so much from his intellectual acceptance of Lutheran doctrines (on theological issues he was decidedly a moderate) but from his deep and personal religious faith.⁽¹²⁾ His power as a preacher centred on personal spiritual conviction, for which he gave an account strongly reminiscent of that later and even more influential preacher, John Wesley. Of his own conversion, Bilney wrote:

Immediately, I seemed unto myself inwardly to feel a marvellous comfort and quietness, insomuch as my bruised bones leaped for joy. ⁽¹³⁾

It was the reality of his sense of personal encounter that gave him his influence and led him into the poor quarters and lazar houses and foul prisons in Cambridge where he distributed his goods to the poor. One local man considerably affected by him was Anthony Yaxley of Rickinghall, a few miles west of Eye, who had adopted the Protestant

faith but had been forced to recant before the Bishop at Hoxne on 27th January 1526.⁽¹⁴⁾ Latimer, himself converted by Bilney, wrote that he was

meek and charitable, a simple good soul, not fit for this world. (15)

But even though Bilney's influence was considerable - and he was only one of many travelling preachers in East Anglia - the extent of that influence cannot in any way be measured, for one of the major problems surrounding the history of religious affairs is that the historian is dealing only with the tip of a vast and complex iceberg. What evidence there is is invariably 'outward': public worship, public disagreements, public trials and recantations, or - at the last - public executions. Apart from a minority of inspired and articulate men and women whose spiritual influence has reverberated down the centuries, the great mass of people leave barely a trace of their silent existence. Perhaps a name may be inscribed on a parish register recording one of the momentous events of life, but of the personal and inward elements of that life there are no hints. For every Nicholas Canon, flaunting his ideas and receiving a public dressing down, there must have been many of similar though secret sympathy working out their own salvation - usually with fear and trembling in our history of rigid orthodoxy. For every old weaver, like Pope, who took his beliefs as far as it is possible to take them; for every Anthony Yaxley who endured public humiliation for his, how many endured private and silent changes of heart without a hint of display, or experienced a deep and perhaps lifelong growth into a new awareness of their relationship with their God?

These were the ones to whom the preachers directed themselves, for it was in their open and receptive hearts that the first seeds of the new insights fell and rooted. It was here that the theological rationalisations, like justification by faith, began to take on a

real and profound meaning. It was to these people that the translation of Tyndale's English New Testament (copies of which were pouring into England by 1526) brought shattering realisations or merely affirmed what they had already been hesitatingly groping towards. It had long been Tyndale's resolve to translate the New Testament for, as he said,

I had perceived by experience how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order and meaning of the text. (16)

But in the twenties, when all this activity was only beginning to develop, the general surface of the land was as yet barely rippling. Life for the majority of people in the 9,000 parishes of England went on much the same as usual.

Little seems to have disturbed the plodding pace of life in Eye in this decade. There were births, marriages and deaths; celebrations and processions; trading and quarrelling; and as yet little outward evidence of nonconformity. Robert Pratty, member of an old Eye family, made his will on Christmas Day in the year 1521 and died within a few months. He offered his soul to the blessed lady and the saints in heaven and hoped he would be buried in the churchyard next to his friends. He left money for a priest to say prayers for his soul, gave barley to the church lights and to each of the guilds. Almost exactly a year later, on 27th December 1522, Robert Kendall's will included a gift of two cows to the guilds and a further two cows for his burial day festivities.

Thomas Skutt described himself as a hermit, although he had four children - John, Edward, Agnes and Beatrice - and made it quite clear in his will that the six local men who owed him sums of money ranging from 35s 9d to £11 were not to get away with their debts. John Mason made his will on his death bed, again in the traditional manner, and left his cart, plough, harrows and ladders to his son John. Symonde

Seman could afford to be more public spirited. He owned stalls in both Eye and Diss markets and left a considerable amount of money to the poor locally; he also gave a substantial sum towards the mending of the roads - perhaps his journeys to Diss in that respect had left something to be desired. His wife Julian was to have his feather bed, eight pieces of pewter, a brass pot, a kettle and two candlesticks, as well as money and a cow. His son James and daughter Katherine also received sums of money and a cow each. His other daughter Alice got the money but not the cow. Seven grandchildren were remembered in his will, but the major part of his inheritance went to his son Augustine who was later to become very prominent in local town affairs. His remaining son, Thomas, a cleric, was made supervisor of the will.

All these wills of the 1520s (and there are only five now in existence) appear completely orthodox in character, traditional in formula and show no signs of being affected by any continental influences. But then those whose lives were being changed by the new doctrines in the twenties were not yet likely to be making their wills and consequently such evidence tends to be limited. (One of them was only fourteen when the decade began.) Another young man in Eye at this time was Richard Thurkettle, who became vicar in his late twenties in 1529. One of his earliest pieces of writing was an inventory of the church silver - made out in his characteristically meticulous manner - and no doubt while conscientiously carrying out his new duties, he kept a watchful eye on the tenor of events taking place around him.⁽¹⁷⁾ He would have approved of the guilds, as they continued to fulfil their role in the local scene, and in a subsidy collected in the 1520s William Fenne and John Dexter paid 2s 3d in taxes for the Guild of Our Lady, while John Golding and Thomas Mason paid 1s 3d on behalf of the less well-off Guild of St Peter.⁽¹⁸⁾

Such homely details of community life - in themselves of no

intrinsic importance - begin to acquire a significance measurable only by time, for it is in the lives of men like these that the events of history are enacted. Of these five men of Eye - William Fenne, John Dexter, John Golding, Thomas Mason and Richard Thurkettle - whose names are recorded in history through a simple fiscal transaction or because of an obsessional liking for lists, the name Fenne was to become associated with radical Protestantism, with one of their kin accused of heresy in the 1530s. The Masons were solid enough citizens, though one of their number was involved in the sales of church plate and refused to pay obits when he was a churchwarden in the 1540s. The name Thurkettle in Eye became synonymous with quiet devotion to the Catholic faith, although the vicar was politic enough (or poor enough) to find space for the outward practices of the new state religion. The Goldings were not such compromisers. Proud and wealthy, they could afford both emotionally and economically to defy the encroachment of state Protestantism and John Golding bred generations of proud and defiant recusants, men whose worldly success (and there was much of that) did not protect them from making real and painful sacrifices on behalf of the old and, as they saw it, the true faith.

Here in this tiny knot of men going about their daily business we can already perceive the soil in which the great religious, political and social upheavals of the sixteenth century were rooted - or in some cases were violently severed. The variety of their responses determined the historical pattern in their little patch of the wood; merely a strand perhaps, but after it England would never be the same again.

However diverse in origin were the forces that cleared the path for the Protestant Reformation, Professor Dickens maintains that by the 1530s those forces had reached a 'critical intensity' throughout

the dominant classes and regions of England.⁽¹⁹⁾ This was certainly the case in Eye.

Previous generations had laid the foundations for a receptivity to the ideas of Protestantism. The twenties had seen the gradual consolidation and clarification of those beliefs. Now, in the thirties, the changes took on a more concrete form both nationally and locally.

It was this decade which saw all the major political and legal changes, the whole variety of Henrician acts and statutes, that accelerated the development of the Anglican church: the Act in Restraint of Appeals, the Act in Restraint of Annates, the Act for Submission of Clergy, the Dispensations Act, the Act of Supremacy, the Succession Acts, the Treason Act, the Six Articles Act, the Act of Dissolution and so forth. These, in sum, turned England's face from Rome and removed the government and taxation of the English church out of the hands of papal jurisdiction.

All this is the stuff of history and we are familiar enough with these momentous events on the national scale, but how much or how little did they matter to the common people? What effect did they really have at ground level?

In Eye, that steady advance and consolidation of Protestant ideas suddenly erupted in the 1530s into a disturbing and divisive reality. If, as R. A. Houlbrooke maintains, the punishment of those who anticipated the official Reformation provides the best guide to the popularity of Protestant doctrines, then Eye can be said to be nothing short of outstanding in the forefront of unofficial Protestantism.

Between the years 1512 to 1537, at least five people from Eye (and there were probably more) were taken before the church courts on a charge of heresy. This is a highly significant statistic, since the Diocesan records reveal similar numbers only for the considerably

larger and much more important towns of the region: six in Norwich, five in Yarmouth and four in Ipswich.⁽²⁰⁾ For the small and impoverished borough of Eye to produce a number of heretics comparable with the major towns of the region is quite remarkable and can only suggest one of two possibilities. Either it signifies an outstandingly vigorous Protestant sympathy, grown out of its earlier Lollard inheritance, or an extremely dynamic local bureaucracy (officials, JPs and others on whom the church courts relied for information) which lost no time in ruthlessly obliterating heresy from its midst.

Either way, religious belief in Eye was clearly no neutered affair. Passions ran high, and it is significant that in those areas where there was greater solidarity of outlook the church courts found it difficult to penetrate. (Few of the suspects in a Sudbury archdeaconry courtbook, for example, came from the known major centres of dissent in West Suffolk.)⁽²¹⁾ Communities with a more consistent religious attitude closed in on themselves in loyalty and self-protection. Not so at Eye. All the evidence suggests that it was, and continued to be, a town torn down the centre by bitter religious controversy.

Dr. Houlbrooke believes that the case of two Eye shoemakers, questioned about heresy in 1532, confirms the survival of Eye's Lollard background:

... their alleged desire to defile the rood in the priory yard, their typically Lollard craft, the presence of pre-Reformation heresy in Eye, the crudity of their language, all argue the survival of an older tradition despite the attempt made by one of them to make Thomas Bilney the Cambridge preacher scapegoat for his ideas. (22)

The two shoemakers, Thomas Fenne and George Glazener, were ordered to appear before the Bishop on 2nd July 1532 'on suspicion of a wicked heretical act'.⁽²³⁾ The articles against George Glazener were:

Fyrste he sayde that he wolde not wurship the crosse then the crucifyxe. Then he sayde that if he hade the Rode that stondeth in the monasterye of Eya in the yerde he wolde brenne it. And he wolde shyte upon the hed to make it a foote hygher than it is now. He sayde thies wurdes in the presence of John Smythe. Item he sayde (in the presence of Roberte Boys servant to the prior of Eye) that he wolde wurship noon ymages. (24)

Glazener confessed to saying that he would not worship the cross or any images, but he denied the accusation that he would burn or defile the rood.

Then Thomas Fenne was examined. He was twenty-six years old and refused to make any direct answer. For this he was committed to prison at Hoxne.

A day in prison loosened his tongue and, on being called the next day to the chapel at Hoxne manor house (the Bishop's episcopal residence), he confessed that he too had said he would not worship the cross or any of the images. And he added

that upon Corpus day last passed he walked with a man pretending hymself to be lerned whose name he suth he knoweth not. And he shewed him that he not to worship noon ymages nor the crucifix.

On that same afternoon, 3rd July 1532, Glazener was again examined during which he maintained that he had learnt his heretical opinions from Bilney's sermon at Hadleigh seven years earlier. On the following day, he implicated other men and confessed that he had heard Robert Fenne, William Fenne and William Plommer, all of Rishangles, often saying they would not worship the images of saints. On this occasion, he admitted that he had after all said publicly that if the rood were in his yard he would burn or defile it. Such ideas, he claimed, he had learnt from Bilney's Hadleigh sermon.

Glazener's abjuration read as follows:

In the name of God Amen I Guye Glasener of Eye in the countye of Suff Shomaker confesse and knowledge byfore youe Reverende father in god Richarde busshop off Norwyche myn ordinarye wheare I am detecte byfore yow that I have affermed and sayde that I wolde not wurship the crosse ner the crucifyxe. And if that I hade

the Rode that stondeth in the monasterye of Eye in my yerde I wolde brenne it. And shyte upon it hed to make it a foote hyegher then it is. And that I wolde wurship noon ymages of sayntes whiche opynions and articles and every of them I utterlye remite refuse and abjure. And I swere by thies holy evangelyes by me corporallye towched that from hensforthe I shall never holde kepe or affyrme or speyke the same or any other contrary to the determinacon of our mother holy churche ner I shall not favor any other person or persons that I shall detecte and shewe theym unto yor Reverende father hod. To whome humbly I submytte my self with contricon of herte for myne offence in that behalve.

Glazener's experience at Hoxne evidently made him more circumspect and he does not appear again in the Diocesan records. His name occurs only once in the Eye documents and suggests he returned to Eye to carry on with his daily life. In 1538 a transaction was entered in the Chamberlains' Accounts recording his payment of 12d for old trees. (25)

Thomas Fenne also made his confession before the Bishop at Hoxne and both men 'submitted themselves freely to the correction' of the authorities 'with contrition of heart as it appeared'.

Afterwards, each of them having touched the Holy Gospels, they freely renounced and abjured the aforesaid articles of this kind specifically and every other kind of wicked heretical act in general. Afterwards the said Richard (i.e. the Bishop) imposed penance on the same George and Thomas as follows: that is, that on the Sunday next following at the time of the procession they were to go in front of the cross in the parish church of Eye bare-foot and bareheaded but otherwise dressed in linen cloths carrying candles in their hands of the value of 2d. And when the procession had finished the vicar ascending the pulpit shall declare to the people the cause of their penance. And then they shall offer the candles to the sacrament of the eucharist, so withdrawing.

The Bishop ordered them to report the completion of their penance to him at Hoxne on the Monday following the feast of St Bartholomew which they duly did and he dismissed the case.

This spectacle of a public penance must have been quite an event in Eye and the earnest young vicar would no doubt have felt some satisfaction in declaring publicly from the pulpit the cause of the penance and in welcoming back into the fold two of his lost sheep.

But Thomas Fenne and George Glazener were not the only dissenting members of his flock and at about the same time another Eye resident was hauled in front of the Bishop on a similar, although rather more trivial, charge. This was Adrian Herrysonne, who may have been the 'Dutchman' who was the only man of this name listed in the subsidy returns eight years earlier.⁽²⁶⁾ (In 1535 another Dutchman was burnt at Lynn, which suggests links connecting congregations in England with those on the continent.)⁽²⁷⁾

Herrysonne was also a shoemaker by trade and for his prosecution a local woman gave evidence.

Margaret Mason of Eye sworn on God's holy Gospels says that Adrian Herrysonne, servant of Robert Smythe of Eye, shoemaker, asked for breakfast to be served to him on the day before Pentecost last past. Then she said Margaret gave him breakfast and he breakfasted. And Adrian said that he would not fast and if he had been at home he would have had better meat.

Reporting 'evidence' from conversations like this indicates there was probably something of a witchhunt being conducted in Eye at this time and is further evidence of a great religious rift in the community when neighbour can inform on neighbour at this level of small-minded prattle.

Even so, the church courts took it seriously and Adrian Herrysonne confessed that what his accuser had said was true and he submitted himself to the Bishop's correction. The authorities were clamping down for, although his offence had few of the theological implications of the other Eye shoemakers, a similar penance was ordered for him and he too was to go bareheaded and barefoot the following Sunday in front of the church procession carrying a wax candle worth 2d.

And when the procession has finished he shall kneel before the high altar until the offertory. Then the chaplain celebrating high mass shall make known to the people the reason for his penance. And then he shall offer the candle to the hand of the priest.

He was to report back to the Bishop after he had performed the penance, which he subsequently did and his case was dismissed.

Another shoemaker - Francis Holles of Harleston - was examined at the same time and it is clear from these cases that one route for the dissemination of heretical opinions was through particular trades; heresy was evidently spreading through the local shoemaking fraternity at a spectacular rate. (Other characteristic Lollard occupations included tailors and glovers, of whom there was an abundance at Eye.)

If all this were not sufficient to rock the foundations of the more conservatively minded, the insidious tentacles of Lutheranism were even beginning to probe behind the sanctified portals of the religious houses. Some religious houses had been affected for a decade or more - the Augustinian friary at Stoke by Clare, probably by 1522, Bury Abbey by 1523, Westacre by 1526. As we have already seen, the Priory at Eye did not escape either, although it is not at all clear at what point it became tainted and it was not until after its dissolution that the monk William Leiton was burnt for his beliefs in 1537.⁽²⁸⁾

In the absence of any direct statements of belief from these early Protestant heretics, we must turn to William Shepard of nearby Mendlesham who, in a remarkable will in the 1530s, set out his own theology. In first forsaking his sins, he continued:

I also forsake the Bysshoppe of Romes usurpyt power wherin he caused me to trust, and commytte me unto God and to hys marcy, trustyng w^toute any dowte our mystrust that by hys grace and the meretes of Jesu Cryst, and by the verteu of the holy passyon and of hys resurrecon, I have and shall have remyssyon of my synnes and resurrecon of body and sowle. (Here I wold not that men shuld say that I dyspyset other holsome sacramentes or good seremonys. But because I am rude and unlernyd, and know not the scriptur, and therfor loke what Godes Word sayth of theym, that saym do I beleve w^tout any dowte or mystrust.) As touchyng the whelth of my sowle, my grond and beleve ys that their ys but one God, and one Mediator betwene God and man, which ys Jhesu Cryst, so that I do excepte none in hevyn nor in erth to be my medeator betwene me and God bot only Jhesu Cryst. (Here in thys poynte I wolde not y^t men shuld thynk that I regard not the prey^r of my Crysten brtheryn, bot that I desyre all good Crysten bretheryn to pray w^t

me that Godes wyll myght be done in me and in all men; For herin I trust to the promyse of God, he that belevyth and ys baptysed shalbe savyd, and he that belevyth not shalbe damnyd.) And as towchyng the buryng of my body, I remytt yt only to the dyscrecon of my executryx. And as towchyng the dystribucion of my temporall goods, my purpos ys, by the grace of God, to be stow them as frutes of fayth, so that I do not suppose that my meryte be by good bestowyng of theym, but my meryte ys by the fayth of Jhesu Cryst only, by which faith suche workes are good. (Here in thys poynt I wold not that men shuld thynk that I dysspote good workes, bot becuse we have ben most chefly deceyvvd by the trust and confydence that we had in our workes, makyng theym equall w^t Crystes precious blod, therfor I wold we shuld consyder the true sentens, that a good worke makyth not a gud man, bot a good man maketh a good worke, for faith maketh the man both good (and) reghtues, for a ryghteouse man levyth by faith. What so ever spryngyth not of faith is synne.) (29)

William Shepard may protest that he is 'rude and unlearned' but there is no evidence in the Eye of the 1530s that any of the early Protestants could defend their beliefs so cogently or with such sophistication. They were genuinely simple folk and their language suggests a more callow theology, bred probably from their Lollard background. It was not to be for another two decades that Eye could match a statement of belief, like William Shepard's, and even then there was a sense of greater passionate involvement, of personal experience, rather than mere disputation.

By this period of the middle thirties, the younger generation had grown to adulthood during the reign of Henry VIII and in all sorts of small ways their spirit differed from that of their forefathers. A number of the older attitudes and observances held little interest for the new generation of Tudors, a generation which was gradually becoming acclimatised (at least in principle) to the idea of vernacular prayers and offices through the various unofficial and semi-official prymer printed in English during the thirties.⁽³⁰⁾ Many of the patterns of fifteenth-century thought had become quite simply old-fashioned. Who, for example, among those redoubtable men of Eye in the century before - men like John Fiske and Robert Anyell whose

chantries ensured that certain ceremonies and prayers would continue 'for ever' - could have dreamed that for many of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren such practices had largely lost their meaning? And they must have been virtually meaningless to a lot of people, for there is no other way to explain the large-scale secularisation of such foundations or the apparent ease with which chantry funds were diverted to practical uses which marked the thirties and forties in England.

In Simon Fish's attack on the clerical establishment - ostensibly on behalf of the outcasts of society - he maintained that learned men now declared there was no such thing as purgatory and that it had merely been invented by greedy clerics who would pray for no one unless they were given money.⁽³¹⁾ Criticism of the clergy was not new, of course, but it was certainly on the increase and it contributed to a general growth of anti-clericalism. In Eye, the only evidence of this was the refusal in the late thirties by some of the town's chamberlains to pay tithes to the vicar. Their own priest was certainly not open to the criticism levelled at many of his brother-clerics of ignorance, for Richard Thurkettle was a learned, scholarly and conscientious man.

Cynicism about the clerical establishment and its motives contributed to the general decline in traditional beliefs, notably purgatory, and with that decline went a whole number of associated ceremonies and rituals. In Eye itself, evidence of this process comes from wills in the forties rather than the thirties, although of course those making their wills in the 1540s would have been moving towards their final attitudes for any number of years before that.

For others, the traditionally-minded, it must have seemed that the secure and unchanging world of their childhood had simply exploded. As change followed upon change, both formally in state legislation and informally in personal attitudes, it was all leading to the death of a whole era. This is how one Augustinian canon in Suffolk

recorded the year 1534 in his chronicle:

This year many dreadful gales, much rain, lightning and thunder, especially in summertime, and at odd times throughout the year; also divers sudden mortal fevers, and the charity of many people grows cold; no love, not the least devotion remains in the people, but rather many false opinions and schisms against the sacraments of the Church. (32)

Indeed it had been quite a year, with the Act in Restraint of Annates, the Dispensations Act, the Act for Submission of the Clergy, the First Succession Act and the Act of Supremacy.

The Act of Succession vested succession to the crown in the heirs of Henry and Anne Boleyn (the only living heir, Elizabeth, had been born the previous September), made it treason to slander the marriage of Henry and Anne and enjoined that every adult subject should take an oath to uphold the Act. This process was carried out in Suffolk by Sir William Waldegrave, John Spryng and Robert Crane,⁽³³⁾ but the Act evoked strong emotions for it struck at the fundamental loyalty of the English temperament, a loyalty that was to play a significant part in subsequent events. (Suffolk, for instance, while generally considered to be a 'Protestant' county, was led by its sense of legal and rightful inheritance to support the Catholic Queen Mary's right to the throne when it was threatened by a Protestant plot.) But even twenty years before this happened, there were many who were outraged on behalf of Queen Katharine and her daughter the Princess Mary whose succession rights had been so flaunted. One local woman, Margaret Ellys from Bradfield St Clair, said that Anne was no Queen but a naughty whore and cried 'God save Queen Katharine'. Although she subsequently pleaded drunkenness in her defence, she probably spoke for many people in the region.⁽³⁴⁾

It was similar with the Act of Supremacy, which recognised Henry's already existing headship of the church and also gave the crown power to conduct visitations of the clergy. With his theological interests, Henry had no intention of remaining a merely

secular protector of the national church. He would exercise some of the spiritual functions previously pertaining to the pope or to the bishops - correcting the opinions of preachers, supervising the formulation of doctrine, reforming canon law, visiting and disciplining both regular and secular clergy, and even in some instances actually trying heretics in person. It is Professor Dickens' contention that Henry's theological knowledge - coupled with his self-righteousness - gave his Supremacy a 'dangerously personal character' in the exercise of what he describes as 'caesaro-papalism'.⁽³⁵⁾

Some priests and curates were by no means reconciled to the Act of Supremacy and, according to the King, read with confusion

hemming and hacking the word of God and such injunctions
as we have lately set forth

so that no man could understand their true meaning. Henry's robust solution to this problem was that such clergymen (together with vagabonds, valiant beggars and readers of the mass of Thomas à Becket) were to be gathered up and imprisoned without bail.⁽³⁶⁾

The Prior of Eye and his brethren were among those of the religious houses who acknowledged the new state of affairs when, in late 1534, they signed their names to the instrument of supremacy. But, however much the people outwardly acknowledged the King's position, it was quite another thing to believe it, and there was evidently sufficient disquiet on the subject to force him in 1536 to send a letter to all the principal magistrates of each county exhorting them to teach his new title of supreme head and to give a similar warning to all abbots, priors, parsons and schoolmasters 'in their churches every Sunday and solemn feast and also in their schools'. In a similar letter, Henry referred to certain 'ungracious, cankered, and malicious persons' who had tried to bring the people to darkness by spreading rumours and false tales. Such 'miserable and papisticall superstitious wretches' and such 'cankered parsons, vicars and curates' should be

sought out for they did not truly declare his, the King's, injunctions and the word of God, but would 'mumble confusely', saying that they were compelled to read these things and bidding their parishioners to do as they had always done.⁽³⁷⁾

From his subsequent history, it is more than likely that the vicar of Eye was one such 'cankerd parson' urging his flock to do as they had always done and seeking to restrain the momentum of change, but he could not in reality put the clock back and in the first decade of his parochial care for the people of Eye the community was already torn by the religious divisiveness that was to mark the major part of the sixteenth century.

In 1537 the first major external effect of the Reformation had its impact on Eye with the dissolution of its Benedictine Priory and Richard Thurkettle found his living in the hands of an eminent layman since the parish church, as part of the late possessions of the Priory, passed to the Duke of Suffolk (although only for two years, after which it reverted to the crown and one wonders which patron the vicar of Eye preferred - Suffolk or the King).

The effect of the Priory's closure can only be guessed at, but whatever people's individual feelings it represented a massive break with the past and with tradition for there had been a Benedictine monastery on the edge of the town for 500 years. The poor no longer received alms at the Priory gate, local employees of the Priory (gardeners, laundresses and so on) lost their jobs, the familiar sound of the Priory bell was heard no more and the buildings began to fall into neglect and disrepair. Perhaps most important of all was the loss of those familiar figures walking through the streets of Eye or along the causeway that linked the Priory with the Church.

The monks were part of daily life in Eye and, according to their names, quite a few of them were local people. They acted as scribes, witnesses, executors to people making their wills; they participated

in local ceremonies; their behaviour provoked scandal and wagging tongues as well as love and devotion, for they were the recipients of many gifts and legacies from Eye inhabitants.

The monks dispersed: some to livings in other parishes; the Prior to a temporary job as local schoolmaster; William Leiton to his violent death only a few months later when he was burned as a heretic; and Richard Allen to his quieter end the next year in Eye churchyard.

It was probably also about this time that the local poor house, the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene, changed hands. According to Tanner, it was taken over at the dissolution by the borough and administered as a corporation venture.⁽³⁸⁾ Since there is no record of an official suppression, it is possible that it had already been secularised in anticipation of crown policies by those wishing to ensure that the town rather than the crown received any benefits accruing from its revenues. For the remainder of the century, Magdalene was organised and run on a municipal basis.

Among Cromwell's various injunctions at this time was the one which introduced the concept of parish registers. This was one injunction that Richard Thurkettle did instantly comply with - no doubt it appealed to his orderly mind - and thus was begun an invaluable documentary source. It was later copied onto parchment in 1599 and its cover records that the names are included of all those who

have been baptized, maryed, & buried since the First
day of November in the year of our lord god 1538. (39)

This is not strictly true as several years are missing, but it is a relatively complete record and was certainly meticulously kept for the period of over twenty years when it was Richard Thurkettle's sole responsibility.

Henry Skeyth had the honour of opening the register with the record of his baptism on 3rd November (although strictly speaking it should have begun with the burial on 2nd November of William Brian, which is recorded later). Also on the 3rd, Mary, the infant daughter of Edward Terold (one of the Eye radicals) was baptised. The first marriage to be registered took place on the 4th when Alice Williams married Robert Scherold. November 1538 was, in fact, a fairly busy month for the vicar, with three baptisms, two marriages and three burials.

Other changes about this time included the introduction of a vernacular bible which, according to the 1538 injunctions, was to be set up in each church and be paid for equally by the incumbent and the parishioners. Priests were instructed

that ye discourage no man privily or apertly from reading or hearing of the same Bible, but shall expressly provoke, stir, and exhort every person to read the same, as that which is the very lively word of God, that every Christian man is bound to embrace, believe and follow if he look to be saved. (40)

There was some dilatoriness in complying with this order and in the following February it was reported, for example, that many curates in Oxfordshire had not yet placed bibles in their churches. Later that same year, forty churches in three deaneries of the Diocese of Lincoln still did not possess bibles. Nearer to Eye, the parishioners at Cratfield acquired their copy in 1539 and their accounts for that year reveal that 6s 2d was 'payed to Mr. Vycar for the two bybyls'.⁽⁴¹⁾ Two years later, however, the government was still complaining that 'divers and many towns and parishes' had failed to provide bibles for their churches and this evidently moved the parish of Bungay to concede for in 1541 the parishioners' half of the bill was recorded as 6s 1d.⁽⁴²⁾

It had also been ordered in 1538 that no candles should be set up before any images in the churches other than before the image of the Saviour. This injunction certainly had no immediate effect in

Eye for the proportion of bequests for lights in local wills continued unchanged until 1541. Roger Veer left 6d in 1539 towards the married men's light and 6d to the singlemen's light, and the following year Thomas Mason gave six pounds of wax for the maintenance of lights in the church. Joan Smythe left 12d to each of the lights, Ellen Wasse 20d to each of them and Joan Mason gave two pounds of wax. In fact, of seven wills made during the year of 1540, five contained gifts for the maintenance of the lights. After this, however, the government's wishes evidently began to filter through and one of the last bequests concerning lights occurs in the will of Robert Sowgate who, in October 1541, left 16d to the 'comyn lyght' (which nevertheless suggests it was still burning). Six years later, the last ever reference to lights (in the extant Eye wills) was made when in 1547 a yeoman, John Hayward, gave 3s 4d

to fynde a lighte contynuallye brennyng before the highe aulter in the sayd church of Eye in thonour of allmightye god in the tyme of Devine service.

Not even during the reign of Queen Mary were there to be any similar bequests.

Thomas à Becket was also out of favour and in 1539 Bungay Church was busy removing all references to him. 2s was paid for 'correkyn' the service of 'Thomas Bekytt', 3s 4d for 'racen' the stained glass windows dedicated to him and on transposing the 'staynyd' cloths on which he was represented.⁽⁴³⁾ In the absence of any similar direct evidence, it is difficult to tell whether the pace of reform was marching or shuffling through Eye - if the vicar had much to do with it, it would be limping rather grudgingly. And was that his reaction perhaps in 1539 when the Duke of Suffolk returned the lease of the old Priory lands and interests to the crown and the owner of his benefice now became the King himself?⁽⁴⁴⁾

It was towards the end of that same year that the Golding sons lost their father, John. He had made his will on 24th November 1539 and its preamble reflected his traditional and conservative piety, leaving his soul to God, Mary and the whole company of heaven. His widow, Christian, four sons William, Edward, Robert and Thomas, and daughter Agnes sought a fit and lasting memorial for him in the church their family had loved and worked for for generations, and they had put up an old fourteenth-century rood screen over which were inscribed the words 'Pray for John Golding'. The screen (which still remains in the church) is thought to have come from the Norfolk monastery of Great Massingham which the Goldings acquired after its dissolution. It contains a series of highly decorative panels showing the primitive figures of sixteen saints. Above the screen is the old rood beam and inscribed on that in early English lettering is the text from Matthew 16 in the translation of Cranmer's Bible which had been available since 1537.

And Jesus said unto his disciples, what doeth it profet a man yf he wyne all the whole world, and lose his owne soule, or what shall a man geve to redem his soule agayne wythall. xvi of Math. (45)

This was an apt and timely reminder by the Goldings that, no matter what outward (or official) doctrinal changes might occur, the condition of the soul remains pre-eminent and they would endeavour to hold onto this truth even if it cost them the whole world. It forms an especially appropriate memorial to this zealous and devoted Catholic family since two of John Golding's descendants in the following century (who by this time were baronets) renounced the whole of their worldly wealth and titles to become simple Capuchin friars.

Richard Thurkettle was related to the Goldings and he acted as John Golding's executor. The vicar and this family appear to have been close and, in these troublesome times, probably gave considerable support to each other. The text from Cranmer's Bible also reminds us

that, though ardent Catholics, the Goldings were clearly not opposed to the idea of a vernacular bible and were evidently encouraged by the 1538 injunctions to read it - even though it has generally been considered in retrospect by historians to have been a major element in the process of transforming allegiance from Catholicism to the new reformed religion.

The influence of a bible freely available to everyone to read in their own language was probably incalculable, for Protestantism was a bible-reading religion in a way that Catholicism never had been. Its wide circulation would contribute, as Cromwell knew it must, to a weakening of orthodox theology and an undermining of the authority of the priesthood. For the first time ever there was the real possibility of the faithful discovering their own version of the truth. (And it is perhaps not surprising that the new head of the church got cold feet a few years later and limited direct access to the word of God to lords, gentlemen and merchants.)

The threat to traditional Catholicism was not, of course, so much from the theology or content of the bible as in the idea of individuals finding their own truth and their own personal relationship to God. Such liberty was not conducive to the maintenance of Catholic unity or to the role of the clergy as interpreters of the laws of God and mediators to the presence of God. Even so, when the vernacular bible first made its official appearance on the scene late in the 1530s, here was one loyal and devout Catholic family happy to go along with it. At this early stage in the development of the English Church, the Goldings - and perhaps many others like them - were prepared to go along with some of the reforms that were taking place. The text from St Matthew reminded them to be wary, but the time had not yet come for them to take any decisive action against the continuing processes of reform. For the thirties saw only the beginnings of the revolution in religion. Even so, the changes had

been dramatic enough, with the authority of the pope replaced by that of the monarch; the attack on the traditional teachings about images, relics and pilgrimages; the people taught the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English; parts of the liturgy put into the vernacular; English bibles circulating freely and the various attempts made to improve clerical education and morals.⁽⁴⁶⁾

While for many people issues like the supremacy would have been peripheral - an irrelevant nicety of theological debate - the changes in ceremony and doctrine were an entirely different matter. These had a direct impact on people's lives, for here was tangible rather than theoretical change. It is significant, for example, that the Pilgrimage of Grace followed not the break with Rome but the changes in ritual, and the conservative priest Robert Parkyn showed more concern in his narrative of the events with the ceremonial changes than with the theoretical notions like the abolition of papal authority.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Richard Thurkettle's reactions to these events would have been invaluable but his comments did not begin until the reign of Edward. Based on his subsequent attitude, it is quite likely he shared the views of one contemporary who said:

See, friends, now is taken from us four of the seven sacraments, and shortly we shall lose the other three also, and thus the faith of Holy Church shall be utterly abolished. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

Perhaps too the Eye vicar felt like the friar who vowed

I will live as my forefathers have done ... whatsoever these new fellows do say. ⁽⁴⁹⁾

Evidence from state papers shows that there was discontent on all sides in the late thirties but that after Henry's severity following the Pilgrimage of Grace, opposition was neither overt nor widespread. And claims made later during Mary's reign that many people acquiesced in conditions purely out of fear certainly carry the ring of truth.⁽⁵⁰⁾

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6. See Chapter 2, 31-2
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14. VCH, II, 27
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The following is taken from Dr. Houlbrooke's list of the people prosecuted for religious opinions in the Diocese of Norwich between 1499 and 1547. It shows a comparative table of the numbers of heretics for some of the towns and villages in the Diocese.

Norwich	6
Eye	5
Yarmouth	5
Ipswich	4
East Bergholt	4
Aylsham	3
Bury	3
Hadleigh	3
Lynn	3
Brockdish	2
Debenham	2
Stoke by Clare	2
Westacre	2
Beccles	1
Bungay	1
Harleston	1
Mendlesham	1
Rishangles	1
Stowmarket	1

21. R. A. Houlbrooke, op cit, 311
22. R. A. Houlbrooke, op cit, 312
23. Norwich Diocesan Registry, Consistory Court, Act Books
ACT 4b (1532-1533) ff33v-37
24. The bracketed portion of this statement which refers to
Roberte Boys is deleted in the original manuscript but is
still clearly legible.
25. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/L1/4, Chamberlains'
Accounts. Undated account placed between (p) and (q) and
probably referring to the year 1538.
26. Suffolk in 1524 being the Return for a Subsidy granted in 1523,
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32. A canon of Butley Priory, Suffolk
A. G. Dickens, op cit, 197
33. VCH, II, 180
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37. John Weever, Antient Funeral Monuments of Great-Britain, Ireland, and the Islands adjacent. With the Dissolved Monasteries Therein contained (London, 1767) 83 & 85
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(Subsequent details from the parish register will not be referenced on an individual basis.)
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42. Christopher Haigh, op cit, 115
Bungay Accounts, 1541
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44. William Dugdale, Monasticon Anglicanum, Vol 3 (London, 1821) 403
45. W. W. Lillie, Screenwork in the County of Suffolk, Pt II, Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 20 (1930) 260-1; Pt III, ibid, Vol 21 (1933) 186-7
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Another tradition has the rood screen coming from East Dereham. The Vicar of East Dereham wrote in his diary for 1877:
Visited for the first time the town of Eye in Suffolk. It has a splendid church, with one of the finest towers I ever saw, and it is perfectly restored. There is a most beautiful ancient screen in perfect preservation, and richly coloured. I heard with much interest that this screen, according to local tradition, was brought from East Dereham! If so, I only wish they would send it back again.
ed Herbert B. J. Armstrong, A Norfolk Diary (1949) 205
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Chapter 6

REFORM CONTINUES

The beginning of the forties saw the people of Eye more preoccupied on the home front than with events at national level. 1540 was a year of extraordinarily high mortality in the town, the cause of which may have been another of the periodic outbreaks of sweating sickness that occurred during the sixteenth century. This was a mysterious disease which has never been identified but which killed very rapidly, often within a few hours of its onset. A later historian described it graphically:

Whosoever was seized with this sickness died, or recovered, within nine or ten hours at most. If he took cold he died within three hours; if he slept within six hours, he died raving. (1)

Sweating sickness was said to have caused the greatest devastation among the well-to-do, so much so that in some parts of the country it was called sardonically by the common people 'Stop gallant' and sometimes 'Stoop Knave and know thy Master'. (2)

Whatever their social status, its victims in Eye that year were many; there were thirty-four deaths compared with the annual average of about thirteen. Almost one entire family was wiped out, for Robert Burman and his three children, Austin, John and Jelian, died within about six weeks of each other, from the end of October to the beginning of December. However, the disease was mainly at its height in the summer and there were eight deaths during the month of August alone.

Another of its victims was Margaret Veer. She was the woman whose relationship with the Prior had caused considerable gossip back in the twenties. Her husband Roger had died only the previous year and he had asked to be buried in the churchyard next to their children. His widow was ill by the following September. She made

her will as she lay dying on 1st September and she was buried on the 5th.

Thomas Rippes, a local scribe, also lost his infant son John that year. He and his wife Anne already had a little daughter, Prudence, who was then almost two years old. Within a year, another daughter, Katherine, was born to them, but soon after that they were to lose another baby son, Augustin, who lived for only five weeks. Two years afterwards, Elizabeth was born, followed by Suzan, but when Suzan was not yet three, the parish register recalls the sad death of another son John and, on the following day, his mother Anne. This was almost certainly a death in childbed and it meant that Thomas Rippes was left with four little girls to bring up, having lost three sons and finally his wife. (A few years later he re-married and his new wife Alice bore him at least two sons who survived: William and Thomas junior.)

These were the realities for the inhabitants of sixteenth-century Eye, the human events which made up the tenor of daily life. The 1540s were no different in that respect, although tragedy does seem to have struck rather more violently at the beginning of the new decade. It was in the forties that William Lytyll married Agnes Holmes and they had their first baby, Rebecca. But when Rebecca was less than five months old, her father was suddenly and strangely killed in an accident that occurred while he was working on the butts. The parish register records simply that he was 'slayne as he was digging at the hill' but it was presumably an appalling human error on the part of someone practising with his bow. William's young widow Agnes found herself in the same plight as many such women with children to bring up and just over a year later she too re-married: this time to Thomas Davis by whom she subsequently bore two sons, Nicholas and Anthony.

But there were always the rogues to divert attention from the

adversities and the misdeeds of Thomas Sherman, accused in 1540 of damage and trespass among other things, would have offered some distraction.⁽³⁾ At an inquisition taken at Eye before Commissioners from the Court of Augmentations, it was said that Thomas Sherman

in harvestyme laste past dyd Userpe Upon the kynges
possession in taken a waye the tythe of a certen pytell
extendyng an acre

and that he

hath Incrochid upon the kynges possession that is to
saye in cuttyng down & carryeng a waye xvi okes in the
kynges heye waye ledyng From a certen heywey From
Yaxlee to Eye on to the brode.

He was also accused of appropriating money collected for the King's last subsidy, for which he had been appointed assessor for the Hundred of Hartismere, and that in addition he and Robert Kene

dyd not paie to the kynges grace For the goodes off
Thomas Wace after the rate of 300 markes as the
Inventorye expressed ...

Furthermore, the jury said he

hath Fellyd a certen tre called an abell upon the kynges
Comon Called Langton Grene and after warde that he hade
fellyd the same abell he was comawndyd by the kynges
officeres that he shuld not carye yt awaye upon payne
that shuld Fall therof and not withstanding the seid
comawndement the same Thomas wrongfully caryed awaye
the seid abell the price off which abell doth extende
to iii^s iiid. All which promissez the seid Jury doth
affirme to be the hole trothe and curcumstances off all
and singuler the promyssez.

Thomas Sherman was evidently a thoroughly bad lot and the conclusion of the jury, all local people, was that he

ys a comon noyer a synister oppressor a wronge doer &
dysturbere of the kynges Tenantes & other of his
Neyboures ...

On a less scandalous level, life at Eye ticked over much as it had always done. Work was being carried out on the tollhouse: the whole building was cleaned and a new lock fitted, but either workmanship was not very satisfactory or the tollhouse suffered a burglary because a few months later the lock was being mended yet again and this time 'a bolt of yrron' was added to make it even more secure.

During these years, in fact, the tollhouse was becoming something of an expense, what with whitewashing, cleaning and re-tiling. One of the bridges was also under repair: it cost the borough 17d to pay Harry Tully for 'a tre fellyng' for Magdalene Bridge and a further 15d paid to Thomas Chapman for 'sawying the planck that made the bregge'. But just occasionally the monotony was lifted and there were other more pleasant diversions - as when the people were entertained by actors, perhaps strolling players, on whom the borough spent 4d for drinks.⁽⁴⁾

For the most part it was the personal and the immediate that occupied centre stage at Eye but just sometimes the wider world would demand attention and at this period in the early forties the King was beginning to regret his munificence in allowing such widespread freedom to read the bible. The Act for the Advancement of True Religion, in the spring of 1543, not only condemned 'crafty false and untrue' translations of the bible (including Tyndale's) but limited the reading of bibles to those of a certain class. Noblemen, lords, gentlemen and merchants were all allowed to possess an English bible, but the common people were forbidden to read the scriptures at all. Among those prohibited access to the vernacular bible were

women, artificers, apprentices, journeymen, servingmen
under the degree of yeomen, husbandmen and labourers.

In the King's last speech to Parliament, in December 1545, he complained that the

most precious jewel, the Word of God, is disputed, rhymed,
sung and jangled in every alehouse and tavern. ⁽⁵⁾

Even allowing for royal exaggeration, this does rather suggest that bible-reading had become quite widespread, although the only evidence for this at Eye is the inscription on the Goldings' rood-beam.

However, one vivid narrative does exist for bible-reading in East Anglia at the popular level. It comes from William Maldon who, remembering his youth in Chelmsford, recalled that several poor men

in his town used to sit on Sundays in the lower end of the church reading the New Testament and that many others would flock to hear their reading. This inspired the young William (much against his father's will - and knowledge) to learn to read in English and

the May-tide following, I and my father's prentice
Thomas Jeffrey laid our money together and bought the
New Testament in English, and hid it in our bed straw
and so exercised it at convenient times. (6)

And so the Reformation continued its steady progress. Cranmer's English Litany was printed in May 1544 to be used, at royal command, in the churches. The following year saw the publication of the King's Prymer and its royal preface ordered all schoolmasters to use it to instruct their pupils 'next after their ABC'.⁽⁷⁾ At Eye School, education was in the hands of laymen during this period and so it is quite likely that this was precisely what happened there. In the tussles for control over the school between the conservatives and radicals in Eye, the forties was a period of triumph for the radicals. Their lay staff, both Master Williams and Master Brodbancke, were highly qualified men who would presumably not be squeamish about opening the scriptures or the litany for all to read and understand, although Richard Thurkettle's disgruntled comments about the decline in discipline and manners and the decay in 'goddes service' when these laymen had charge of the school leave us in no doubt as to what his feelings were on the matter.

Apart from the school, there is only one other source of evidence coming from Eye at this time with which to assess the impact on the town of the wider issues. These are the wills, and whereas the grammar school in the 1540s displays the triumph of radicalism, the wills are noticeable only for their conservatism. Only one overtly Protestant will exists before the reign of Edward VI. This was the will of Thomas Roser, a tanner, who in 1541 confidently left his soul

to the mercye of allmightie god trusting only his
preciuse deth to be my chef Salvacon.

And even Thomas Roser's air of assurance becomes a little confused when, at the end of his will, he leaves the residue of his goods and chattels for disposal by his executor

as best shall seame to please god and to proflight my
Sowle ...

Evidence from wills, however, has certain serious limitations, not the least being that people do not choose when they are going to die. The elderly often resist change, and the majority of those who were making their wills in the thirties and forties were perhaps more inclined to hold onto their traditional beliefs and attitudes. It is not until the wills of the fifties, sixties or seventies that we can really begin to judge the extent of the impact of the Reformation on Eye.

1546 was described as a 'troublus yere' at Cratfield⁽⁸⁾ but little of any moment seems to have taken place at Eye, save the death of the sexton, William Hill, who was replaced by Robert Fuller. He was to hold that post for almost forty years⁽⁹⁾ but there was shortly to be a replacement of a more significant kind in the capital.

Henry's long reign drew to its close in the early hours of 28th January 1547 and the nine-year old Edward was crowned on 20th February. The new regime which the boy king nominally headed set about systematically denying the major points of Catholic doctrine and practice: purgatory and prayers for the dead; the use of images; clerical celibacy and Catholic priesthood. It advocated a characteristically Protestant theology, with its views on justification by faith, predestination and the correct form of church service. This second wave of the Reformation was more overtly Protestant than that which had occurred under Henry.⁽¹⁰⁾

Even by the end of the King's first year, Parliament had imposed some significant reforming measures. The Six Articles Act removed all restrictions on printing, reading, teaching and expounding the scriptures and copies of the Paraphrases of Erasmus and the Book of Homilies were ordered to be placed in all churches - thus ensuring a course of positive preaching of reformed doctrines. Communion was to be administered to the laity in both kinds, and in that same session of Parliament the Act was passed that confiscated chantries and other religious endowments.⁽¹¹⁾ Chantries and guilds, colleges, free chapels, obits, lights all disappeared, as did some hospitals. (When Edward VI came to the throne, Suffolk still had six collegiate churches, nineteen hospitals or lazar-houses and a great variety of chantries and guilds.)⁽¹²⁾

The new Chantries Act of 1547 reflected the more radical theological standpoint and, unlike the earlier Act of Henry VIII which had stated bluntly that the money raised from dissolving chantries was needed for the war against France and Scotland, this time the money was intended to be put towards good works. According to its preamble, chantries had perpetuated false, ignorant and superstitious beliefs and the consequences of the suppression would be put to good use

as in erecting of grammar schools to the education of youth in virtue and godliness, the further augmenting of the universities, and better provision for the poor and needy. (13)

A fresh set of commissioners was despatched to each county to take inventories of colleges and chantries and make schedules of their property. The Suffolk certificate was issued on 13th February 1548 and it contains over 221 separate entries, including over 300 endowments for chantries which ranged in value from 2d to £300. In addition, a considerable amount of plate and ornaments was also confiscated, including bell-metal, lead from the roofs of chapels and cash to the value of £52 6s 8d.⁽¹⁴⁾

Details of the Eye chantries were recorded in certificate No. 45, and entry No. 5 refers to the grammar school. Special reference was made to the fact that the schoolmaster was sometimes a layman and sometimes a priest, and the certificate noted that at present the post was vacant. The school was valued at £7 6s 8d, of which £1 14s 7d was paid out in 'Rentres Resolutes to dyvers Lords'. It was also noted that the inhabitants of the town had taken the remaining £5 12s 1d for their own use.⁽¹⁵⁾

Most of the entries on the Suffolk certificate relate to small endowments, usually in the nature of a rent-charge which provided for an obit on the anniversary of the deceased person's burial day. Eye was no exception and entry No. 90 records two smaller chantry foundations in the town, one valued at 8s and the other worth only 6d. Fuller details of these foundations appeared in the original presentment to the commissioners which Richard Thurkettle copied into his book. Eight shillings was paid every year

owt of parte of the profyts of dyverse landes and
tenements in the tenure of thynhabitants of the town

of which 4d was given 'to the prest for his dirge', 4s 4d to the priest for 'prayeing every Sondag in the yere for the First gever of the seyd lands' and also for the services of the sexton and the bell-ringers 'wiche hathe ben so used tyme out of mende'.

The Resydewe of the proffygths of the seide lands is
employed to the meytence of the seide town accordyng
to the donors gyfft and his last wyll and testament. (16)

This particular chantry was the one founded by Robert Anyell who had left Foddismore meadow in Eye

for the reduction and payment of the common fines of
the town

on condition that he was remembered by the people during Pentecost through services, prayers, a mass, ringing of bells and the procession round the borough led by the sacristan in which prayers would be said for his soul at various parts of the town.

The other chantry referred to was worth only 6d. This was

One Curtylage or yard in Eye gyven as it is supposed by one John Upston to thyntent the vicar of the seid Town of Eye shuld praie for the sowle of the seid John for ever who hath lykwyse accustomed to praie for hym by the space of lx yeres ... (17)

Richard Thurkettle also added a note in his book referring to the chantry foundation of John Fiske, which had been used for the founding of the grammar school. According to the vicar, 4s 4d was paid out (or should have been paid out) every year to perpetuate John Fiske's memory; 10d was paid to the vicar by the churchwardens for 'ii diryges and masse pence', and he also noted that the churchwardens received a further 4s for John Upston. These various additions by the vicar (which, significantly, do not appear in the official chantry certificate) are extremely ambiguous. It is not at all clear whether such payments were actually being made or whether he felt they should have been made. A later comment in Edward Golding's hand that the presentment to the commissioners was 'contrary to a truthe' confirms the likelihood of shady dealings but does not unfortunately clarify the issue. In the absence of any really conclusive evidence, we can only make suppositions. Perhaps the very ambiguity of evidence at this time whispers of chicanery and opportunism, and if certain parties in Eye were trying to deceive the King's commissioners then it is hardly surprising that the historical data we do have is a little less than ingenuous.

Indeed the Suffolk chantry certificates as a whole show that in a large number of cases the action of the crown had already been anticipated and that laymen were holding ecclesiastical positions in an attempt to prevent such incomes being confiscated.⁽¹⁸⁾ This would certainly appear to be the case at Eye; the major sources of income had already been secularised and were now firmly under municipal control. Only the minor chantries and obits were left for the hands of the crown. Neither of the Eye guilds is referred to in the Suffolk

certificate nor is there any mention of the Hospital of St Mary Magdalene, which suggests they had already been stripped of their ecclesiastical status, and this is confirmed two years later by the sale of the possessions of Magdalen Chapel and 'all the gyld aule stuff'.⁽¹⁹⁾

Here again the historical task of unravelling the threads of truth becomes a complex procedure. The cross-currents were so intermingled that one-track conclusions are likely to be a distortion. A deep split severed the community in Eye: on one side of this chasm stood the vicar and on the other side his arch-enemy, William Thrower, a yeoman who was eminent in town affairs. (He was variously churchwarden, bailiff, and when not holding office was a member of the Twelve or Twenty-four.) He also tended to get into debt. Richard Thurkettle not only cast considerable doubt on William Thrower's integrity, he also put the full responsibility for many actions firmly at his door. He held him culpable for the sale of many of the church goods and clearly felt him to be ring-leader on several occasions during Edward's reign.⁽²⁰⁾ It is tempting to see William Thrower and his confederates through the eyes of Richard Thurkettle as radical and dangerous Protestants overthrowing the last vestiges of the old faith. And obviously if they had been devout Catholics they would hardly have shown such flippancy towards the church valuables and artefacts which had once played such a major role in Catholic faith and practice. It is not difficult to understand the vicar's distress as he stood by helplessly and watched the last few precious remnants of his faith being so airily discarded. But, given the fact that we can safely assert that William Thrower and his friends were not loyal Catholics, we cannot necessarily in consequence label them Protestants. It is here that we begin to detect a further dichotomy which is outside the arena of theological debate and should rather

be styled 'town versus church' or perhaps even 'town versus crown'. Some of them may have welcomed the new doctrines, others may have been indifferent, but what did concern them was their own locality, the advance of their borough (and in a few cases the lining of their own pockets). They may have been loyal servants of the King, but if they could prevent local lands and local money from reaching the hands of the state by ensuring first that it reached the hands of the borough, then they would - and did. And the economic and social changes which followed on from the theological ones gave them that opportunity. 'Pragmatists' might be a more accurate description of them.

The consequences of the new theology also had an effect on another body of practical men: those who acquired the old chantry lands from the crown. Several grants were made in the Court of Augmentations in 1549 and 1550 relating to property in Eye and the new owners were described as gentlemen, knights or esquires. Francis Boldero and Robert Perker, both gentlemen, paid over £1,500 for a considerable amount of property originally belonging to chantries, guilds and free chapels. These included premises in Eye pertaining to Chikering Chapel and also 'a curtilage in Eye, Suff, in tenure of the vicar'.⁽²¹⁾ This was the piece of land given by John Upston in the 1480s in return for prayers for his soul.

This type of transaction, involving unknown people at a distance, probably alienated many of the ordinary and uncommitted people of Eye, providing yet more fuel for those already hostile to the changes taking place around them. A new landlord for the small piece of land that he rented no doubt added insult to injury in the mind of the vicar of Eye.

Much deeper injury, however, would have been felt by those for whom the final closure of the chantries was a body blow to orthodox belief. For, although the belief in the doctrine of purgatory had

already declined considerably, some people would still have found the King's actions deeply offensive, and we should not underestimate the outrage or anguish felt by those who genuinely believed their friends, relations or ancestors would now have their torments in purgatory prolonged by such callous action. For the town as a whole, the Edwardian Chantry Act marked the end of an era for it meant the disappearance of those old and familiar customs, like the borough processions, which had been practised for generations.

The Edwardian Chantry Act had denounced the doctrine of purgatory but just what significance did this hold for the people generally? In Bristol, chantry masses had begun to decline long before and the citizens were tending to seek more lasting memorials by endowing sermons, increasing their alms-giving or endowing schools. In York, no perpetual chantries were founded after 1510, although bequests for temporary chantries, obits and funeral masses continued on a large scale until the reign of Edward. The counties of Hampshire and Buckinghamshire saw a decline in endowed prayers for the dead by the 1530s, but such prayers were continued in Somerset, Kent, Norfolk and Yorkshire - and in Lancashire the last known trentals were as late as 1558.⁽²²⁾ The picture over the country then is patchy. In Eye, no perpetual chantries had been founded since the beginning of the century, although temporary chantries, obits and funeral masses continued at much the same rate. Taking the Eye wills in ten-yearly periods, about half specified some sort of bequest for their souls during the period 1500 to the reign of Edward. This compares with a proportion of 60% for the entire fifteenth century.

At first sight this suggests very little change in the popular belief in purgatory, but if we look more closely at the wills it becomes evident that, although still existing in some form, concern for their souls was rather less than a burning issue. In the six years preceding Edward's reign, for example, seven of the thirteen

extant wills mention the soul. Joan Mason was more traditional when in 1540 she left £6 for a priest to sing for her soul, but for the rest it was a hit and miss affair. Five merely gave the residue of their goods 'to profight my Sowle', 'for the welfare of my soul', 'to be done for my soul and all Christian souls' and 'for the wealth of my Soul'. One requested the poor to pray for him and another, in the unlikely event of his three daughters dying before they received their inheritance, instructed his legacies to be disposed of 'in deeds of charity' for his soul.

After 1547 bequests for the soul became rare. Only one testator, John Hayward, showed any real concern and this was during the first year of Edward's reign. He asked for 3s 4d to be paid

to kepe an annyversarye and obytt daye for me and myne
Frindes ones in the yere

and on that same day 13s 4d was to be given to the poor of the town.

A further 3s 4d was to go to

fynde a lighte contynuallye brennyng before the high
aulter ... for ever

although even this conservative testator was aware of the see-saw of theology and added the rider

or solong tyme as the Lawes of the Realme of England
shall permytt and suffer the same.

John Hayward's will indicates some of the confusion felt by people of the time on doctrinal questions since, although he bequeathed his soul to

allmightie god my creator and redemer beseching all
the celestiall congregacon to ayde me with thir prayers

he also assumed that he might through the merits of Christ's passion be partaker of the fruits of His glorious death. Perhaps in an age of theological complexity he was merely playing safe.

There were no further bequests for the soul during the whole of Edward's reign, although a small proportion occurred again during the reign of Mary and there was even one under Elizabeth. The last

trental in Eye had occurred in 1529 in the will of Symonde Seman and testators on the whole appear to have converted direct concern for their souls into gifts to the church or, more especially, gifts to the poor. John Golding, for example, father of the fervent Catholic line, left as his only memorial 20s to the local poor to be paid on the day of his burial and a further 20s to be paid on the first anniversary of it. If his five children died without issue before they were 21 - an unlikely event - then his property was to be sold

and the mony therof comynge too dyspose of dedes of
charitie for the welth of my sowell and my frendes sowles.

Such bequests, although a nod in the direction of the old beliefs, had become something of a cliché and in reality the doctrine of purgatory had lost much of its power.

Other wills confirm this sense of habitual but shallow tradition. Several testators left money to the poor in ways that echo but do not give substance to the older traditional bequests. Thomas Makyn, for example, left 10s in 1540 to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial and a further 5s for them on his thirtieth day. In Mary's reign, Augustine Seman left 40s for the poor on his burial day, two bushells of wheat on his seventh day and a further two bushells on his thirtieth day. Thomas Barker instructed his son William to provide bread, cheese and beer on the same three days.

The last bequest ever for the soul in Eye occurs in the will of Katherine Webbe, widow of William Woodman Webbe, who left 40s in 1562 to her goddaughter but if she died then the money was to go to

the poore folkes to pray for o^r soules.

This, in a will with decidedly Calvinistic overtones, confirms not only the extreme theological confusion surrounding many people's personal faith, but also the sense of mechanical habit that attended the notion of prayers for the soul.

Even so, the conservative vicar of Eye had continued indefatigably to celebrate the perpetual chantries until their suppression in 1548

and, when the theological climate was more conducive, quickly reinstated them during Mary's reign.⁽²³⁾

But the Edwardian changes were not restricted to the abolition of purgatory and churchwardens' accounts reveal some of the more practical implications of the new theology. In Bungay in 1547 certain images were sold off and the windows were re-glazed in plain glass. Two tabernacles were removed. At Cratfield in the same year, 'stayners' were employed to write scriptural texts on the walls after the rood lofts had been removed. The following year at Bungay saw the sale of further tabernacles and images as well as some church pewter. The position of the bible in Protestant theology was demonstrated for 1s 3d was spent in making a lectern for it.⁽²⁴⁾

The revenues of all chantries, guilds, hospitals, obits, anniversaries, lights and so on might ostensibly now belong to the King, but theory and practice were two different things and in Eye in 1547 none of the obits was paid - either to the vicar or to the King. William Thrower, who was a churchwarden at the time, is reported to have said that he did not think any lands had been given for such a purpose.⁽²⁵⁾ 1548 was little better. No obits were paid and the school was still without a schoolmaster. Finally, the churchwardens hired another layman, Robert Shene, to take over that job.⁽²⁶⁾

But what must have shocked conservatives most was the sale of the church contents. Eye was only one of many parishes which sold plate, vestments, jewels, bells and even occasionally lead from the roof to finance a variety of purposes. (At one Reading church, money raised from the sale of chalices went towards paving the streets.)⁽²⁷⁾ Bungay churchwardens had raised 14d by selling two of their images, but there is no trace of what happened to the images taken from Eye church.⁽²⁸⁾ Thirteen had to be replaced during Mary's reign, but it is impossible to tell whether these were new acquisitions or the

originals simply re-purchased from local people. One north country rector remembered his father acquiring some of the former property of Roche Abbey just after the dissolution and saying

Might I not, as well as others, have some profit of the spoil of the Abbey? For I did see all would away; and therefore I did as others did. (29)

The attitude of parishioners may have been similar when it came to these later Edwardian sales and much church fabric was sold at very reasonable prices. Sometimes the money forthcoming did not reach the purposes for which it was intended and at Eye the vicar was deeply suspicious of some of his churchwardens in this respect. He names particularly two of the 1547 churchwardens, William Thrower and James Seman (the latter a genuine and ardent Protestant), and the 1548 churchwarden Thomas Blow, all of whom sold off a great deal of church plate

and never yett made accompte for it. (30)

It would be interesting to know if such sales were made - as was claimed at Cratfield - 'by the consent of the hole Towneshyp'. (31)

According to Richard Thurkettle, William Thrower, Thomas Blow and Robert London (who was then bailiff) took themselves off to Norwich where they sold, for an unspecified amount, the 'Best Crosse of Silver and gylt' which weighed 89 ounces. (An earlier inventory had described this cross as 'enamyled with ii ymages Marye & John'.)(32) They also sold two chalices weighing 17 ounces for 5s 4d an ounce and oddments of silver amounting to £3 11s 8d. Their sales also included a pair of silver censers weighing 28 ounces, a pair of chalices, a silver paten, a silver pax and the silver of a mass book which had been given by the Prior. The sum raised on this particular trip to Norwich was £40 13s 6d.

According to their accounts, Robert London, William Thrower and Thomas Blow gave £3 6s 8d each to various individuals (to Robert Shene, William Mason, William Knappe the younger, John Manby and

Nicholas Dix). What these payments represented it is impossible to say. For their expenses they claimed varying amounts: William Thrower 5s 8d, Thomas Blow 7s 5d and Robert London 19s 10d. (The latter's much larger claim also included a trip to the capital on business concerning the town's charter: 'for Rydyng to London to renewe the Charter'.)(33)

Since the churchwardens' accounts no longer exist, we have no way of substantiating the vicar's claims that the accounts did not tally and that Robert London kept in his own pocket £5 5s 4d, William Thrower £10 2s 8d and Thomas Blow £6 5s 11d. In a copy of these transactions taken almost ten years later when it would appear he was compiling evidence of the corruption of certain individuals, Richard Thurkettle noted that

All thes parcells before dyd I copye owte of a byll that the Goodman Heryng shewed me the xiii day of December 1557. (34)

(William Herring was a close friend of the vicar and in 1557 he was bailiff of Eye, which would account for his access to such information.)

The vicar also noted that William Thrower had sold the chalices once belonging to Magdalen Chapel, and he added a rueful comment that it would have been better had the money raised been put towards repairs to the poor house since it was 'in greate decaye'. There is a strong, if not quite explicit, suggestion here that William Thrower had himself pocketed the proceeds since he did not record details of this particular sale. The vicar's outrage at these events seems tinged with a sense of impotence, for his final comment on the subject is in sorrowful rather than aggressive tone:

Remembre that howse for the poor pepull and seyng that ye geve no thyng to it take no thyng from it. (35)

He was probably quite right to be suspicious, for in a certificate made for Protector Somerset by the Eye churchwardens, it was stated that plate sold at Eye was worth £22 19s 0d - a considerable

reduction on the amount of over £40 which was raised on only one trip.⁽³⁶⁾

Not all the contents of St Peter's received such scant treatment however. When Edward's council ordered the removal of all stone altars and their replacement by a table, the high altar was not broken up (as many were) but carefully preserved by someone - someone who clearly felt this was going just too far.

Communion was in future to be administered from a plain wooden table 'set up in some convenient part of the chancel' and the Bungay accounts record that 5s 6d was paid to three men for

whiting the chancel and making up the walls at the low altar and the walls in the church.

6d was given for half a coomb of lime, 3d for nails and a further 12d

for masons work when the altar tables were set up.

8d was spent on tiles, more lime was bought and new altar cloths, costing 15d, were apparently made up from some of the material of the old church vestments. The next year's accounts show the same men

laying a plank on the high altar

and 2d being paid out for cleaning the church after all this work had been completed. Timber for the new communion table cost 7s and it cost 18d to have the old altar removed and carted away. 4d was spent on a 'mat before the communion table' and finally six yards of 'brode dornycks' for the new table cost 8s 4d.⁽³⁷⁾

Similar amounts were probably spent at Eye on making the new communion table, but they would have been spared the costs of breaking up the old stone altar for in this case it was not destroyed, as most seem to have been. This was an instance when the zeal of William Thrower and his friends did not carry the day for the stone slab, 6'11" long by 2'7" wide, with the five crosses on its face which formed the high altar was kept intact and now lies in the pavement of the north chapel at Eye, a permanent reminder of the lost religion of mediaeval England and those turbulent times in the

sixteenth century. If the unwieldy stone slab of the high altar survived all the upheavals, then perhaps other ornaments, images or even stained glass were similarly preserved. And indeed, if we compare an inventory made of the church contents in December 1557 with an earlier one of 1525, it is apparent that some of the church goods, including a number of vestments, were in fact carefully stored away in the event of yet another change in religious practice.

However, in these early years of Edward such a possibility must have seemed remote in the extreme and Richard Thurkettle would have sympathised with the sentiments of that other conservative priest, Robert Parkyn, when he described Rogation Day 1548.

'... no procession was made about the fields, but cruel tyrants did cast down all crosses standing in open ways despitefully ... yea, and also the pixes hanging over the altars (wherein was remaining Christ's blessed body under form of bread) was despitefully cast away as things most abominable; and (heretics) did not pass of the blessed hosts therein contained, but villainously despised them, uttering such words as it did abhor true Christian ears for to hear: but only that Christ's mercy is so much, it was marvel that the earth did not open and swallow up such villainous persons ... (38)

The theological changes also had their social implications and it was now considered no longer necessary for priests to remain celibate. During the next four years until the accession of Mary more than a quarter of the priests in the Diocese of Norwich took advantage of the new freedom. When Mary eventually came to the throne over 360 of them were deprived of their livings for being married - a very high proportion in view of the short time in which clerical marriage had been legalised. But although such a large number of his fellow-priests took wives, Richard Thurkettle was not among them. In 1549 he was about the age of 52. Perhaps his personal predilections did not lead him in the direction of matrimony, although it is more likely that his conservative temperament would be scandalised by this latest innovation. (Robert Parkyn had been outraged at the 'lewd example' set by Archbishop Holgate who

married in late middle age.)⁽³⁹⁾ Here again, though, an aversion to clerical marriage does not necessarily imply Catholic sympathies, for many ordinary parishioners throughout the country objected to the new state of affairs. Women in the north referred to the offspring of such liaisons as 'priest's calves' and even Queen Elizabeth herself was later to snub the wives of her bishops.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Such conservatism is another example of the many-stranded response to change and, while ardent Catholics would be opposed to clerical marriage on the grounds of theology, the issue for many parishioners was simply one of tradition and usage. Their priests had always been single men, unencumbered with wives or children. Detached from such family ties, a priest could - in theory at least - devote all his emotional energies to those under his pastoral care. The arrival of a wife in the vicarage, followed by children, was a unique social situation and it was one that particularly provoked hostility.

This was, however, one innovation that the parishioners of Eye did not have to confront at this stage of the reforming process and the Marian Bishop of Norwich later commended the fact that Richard Thurkettle had never married.⁽⁴¹⁾

The second year of the reign of the young King saw the introduction of the new liturgy as the sole legal form of worship; the new prayer book, entirely in English, came into operation on Whit Sunday, 9th June 1549. It cost a Bristol church 4s for 'a new boke of the order sett forth' and at Bungay 5s was spent on 'making 12 books of the service'; that was in addition to the 5s 4d spent on three English psalters.⁽⁴²⁾ The vicar of Eye's only comment about these momentous events was a factual statement betraying none of his real feelings:

This yere the first booke of comon service in Englysshe was sett forth in yngland. ⁽⁴³⁾

The penalties accompanying this first Edwardian Act of Uniformity would certainly deter him from making too public his reactions and they more or less ensured compliance with the new form of worship for a priest was liable to lose the profits of his benefice and may even have been imprisoned for six months if he refused to use the prayer book or if he used any alternative form of worship. A second offence of the same nature would result in the permanent loss of all his benefices and a twelve-month period of imprisonment. Life imprisonment would follow a third offence. Even an open attack on the prayer book was to be punished with a £10 fine on the first occasion, £20 on the second and the loss of all goods on the third.⁽⁴⁴⁾

With the 'Protestants' of Eye no doubt watching his reactions closely (and the churchwardens at that time were for the most part of 'Protestant' persuasion) the vicar was wise to tread warily, and he probably shared his real feelings with only a few trusted friends, like William Herring or the Goldings. It was an unenviable position for anyone less than a hero or a martyr, this weighing-up of livelihood against belief. For livelihood it certainly represented and, although Richard Thurkettle's will reveals a man of some substance, his income seems to have derived entirely from ecclesiastical sources; any infringement of church laws would undoubtedly have resulted in the loss of all these. (There is evidence that Richard Thurkettle was a pluralist: in 1543, when he was already chaplain to the Bishop of Hereford, he was given a dispensation to hold another benefice of the same Bishop.)⁽⁴⁵⁾ He must have suffered many heart-searchings as each new step in the process of reform led him and his flock further away from what he was convinced was the truth. Even when he opted for the familiar and secure, it cannot have been with an easy conscience, still less with the cheerful pragmatism of the vicar of Bray, for it was being demanded of him that he preach a message his heart could not

subscribe to. The reaction of this introverted man to the circumstances in which he found himself was to become a master of evasion and no doubt he used this to advantage when seeking to guide those under his spiritual care and direction.

And so, in their increasingly bare and colourless church, the townsfolk of Eye were introduced to the novelty of hearing the service in their own language. Once again, wills are the only - however inadequate - guide to the reactions of local people to these events, and of nine wills made during Edward's reign that happen to have survived, only two manifest any traditional form of theology. One was John Manestrye, a weaver, who left his soul to God and 'to all the holye companye of hevyn'; the other was William Chychlye who did likewise. On the other hand, only one will indicates any Protestant sympathy. This was Joan Johnson, a widow, who commended her soul

to allmyghty god my maker & Redemer whyche hathe Redemyd
me with hys most precios bloode.

The remainder can only be classed as confused or indeterminate.

John Hayward, a yeoman, was confident that he would be partaker of the fruits of Christ's passion and yet he besought 'all the celestially congregacon' to aid him with their prayers. Richard Stannard, a husbandman, decided to back it both ways and commended his soul both to his redeemer 'who hathe redemed with hys moost precyouse bloode' and also to the blessed company of heaven. (For this will, as also in the case of Joan Johnson who uses the identical phrase of being redeemed with Christ's most precious blood, one of the witnesses was Robert Shene, the lay schoolmaster of Eye. His name appears on several wills at this time which suggests he may have been acting as scribe and might therefore be influencing the wording of testators' religious sentiments.)

The remaining wills for the period of Edward's reign give nothing away and simply bequeath their souls to 'allmyghtye god' for

in the see-saw of theological controversy no one had yet doubted that He at least existed, although William Kettleburgh did add a cautious 'etc' to cover all eventualities.

Step by step Eye turned its face from the old world to the new, not so much in glory as in bewilderment. Subsequent wills reveal a quaint mishmash of doctrinal notions, a hybrid religion of ancient ideas and imagery impaled on the vigorous idiom of the new English bible and prayer book. Had Eye been more homogeneous in its outlook such confusion would not have arisen, but it was deeply split and it could have been said of this small Suffolk community as it was of London that when feasts were annulled 'some kept holy day and some none'. A privy councillor admitted in 1549 that

the old religion is forbidden by a law, and the use of the new is not yet printed in the stomach of eleven of twelve parts in the realm. (46)

If it was not actually printed in their stomachs, the new religion was proving rather convenient for the churchwardens of Eye and for the third year running 'thei payed nether for obits nor sancredres'. Despite the fact that this year the vicar had at least one supporter among the churchwardens (Augustine Seman, brother of the fiercely Protestant James, but himself a Catholic) the sales of church plate continued unabated. The best vestment was also sold off as was 'one aulter clothe the deacon and subdeaken to the same'. The churchwardens did record the sales of vestments but for all the rest, wrote Richard Thurkettle, 'I never se accompte'.⁽⁴⁷⁾ His book by this time begins to read like a catalogue of churchwardens' misdemeanours, although it was not at all uncommon elsewhere either during the reign of Edward VI for parishioners to commandeer property made redundant by the new prayer book. Chalices might end up on the local squire's table and copes made useful coverlets for beds.⁽⁴⁸⁾

With the dawn of 1550, the scene at Eye becomes monotonously familiar and sales made this year included the goods once belonging to the now defunct guildhall. Once more William Thrower was much in evidence, again as a churchwarden, and this year one of his fellow wardens was Robert Fuller the sexton. In 1550, the vicar recorded

the chirchewardens dyd many thynges wiche I thynk in
my conscyence wold nat have ben done withowte Throwers
cowncell and Fuller Sexten

and he particularly pointed to both the 'sellyng awaye of all the gyld aule stuff' and the sales of lead. (It is not clear whether this was lead from the church roof or from the guildhall itself.) The vicar clearly held the ubiquitous William Thrower largely responsible for these misdeeds and the two men remained at odds with each other throughout their lives, but he subsequently forgave the sexton Robert Fuller and included him ten years later as a beneficiary in his will.

Richard Thurkettle was also critical about certain repairs that were alleged to have been carried out in the town and certain rents supposed to have been collected on behalf of the town by the churchwardens, and again there is the strong implication that the wardens' accounts did not tally with reality:

... looke in your accompte that yere and se the
reparacons and the Rentes, than se what the town
receyvyd. (49)

Nevertheless, 1550 did mark one change from the previous three years in that it was the

first tyme the annyversarye or obyte was payed to the
kyng

and significantly the payment was made by William Thrower himself. It is impossible to tell what pressure the churchwardens were under by now from the state authorities, but it is clear from their previous record that such payments were not usually made with any alacrity.

That same year it was ordered that all the old service books should be delivered to the civil authorities and then sent onto the bishops for destruction. At Cratfield, Symond Smith took the 'olde Testamenys' to the 'exchange' but this order was widely ignored in some parts of the country, especially the north.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Later evidence suggests it was also ignored in Eye for, during Queen Mary's reign, at least fourteen books of the old service were in use in the church. (Some of them may, of course, have been new replacements but a 1557 inventory made by Richard Thurkettle tended to include the prices of all new items; since no such sums are mentioned alongside these fourteen books it seems likely that the original service books had not been returned to the authorities as ordered but had been carefully stored away - and it is not difficult to guess by whom.)⁽⁵¹⁾

Meanwhile the people of Eye had other preoccupations. In 1551 sweating sickness broke out again in London. It spread throughout the land and its victims may have numbered tens of thousands.⁽⁵²⁾ It certainly seems to have found its way to Eye for the number of deaths that year was twenty-three, as against an annual average of thirteen for the previous decade. Most months were up on average, but September to November seem to have been the worst. On the whole it seems to have attacked the most vulnerable members of the community, the poor and the young. The scribe Thomas Rippes lost both his wife Anne and his son John on consecutive days in September (probably in childbirth); Thomas Barker 'pore man of Mawdlen' was buried in November and altogether nine children or young people died that year. Three of these nine were probably infant deaths (i.e. no more than a few weeks old) but, if we compare the figures for other years and discount the infant deaths, 1551 was still a heavy year for youthful mortality. (Apart from two infants, there were no youthful deaths in 1548; there were two in 1549, five in 1550 and four (of which

three can be identified as infants) in 1552.)⁽⁵³⁾ Sweating sickness was, however, not the only problem; severe financial constraints and rampant inflation forced the government to debase the coinage. It also ordered the confiscation of plate, vestments and other valuables considered now to be unnecessary for the revised form of service. Unlike earlier government orders, this was explicit about its economic motives and stated

that for as much as the King's Majesty had need presently of a mass of money ... commissions should be addressed unto all shires of England. (54)

By the following May, 1552, a commission had been set up in Suffolk to take

into the Kinges handes such church plate as remayneth to be employed unto his Highness use. (55)

Sir Thomas Cornwallis of neighbouring Brome, who knew the Goldings and was himself in his heart a supporter of the Catholic cause, was appointed as one of the nine commissioners for the county who were to make an inventory of plate, jewels, vestments, bells and other ornaments from churches, chapels, brotherhoods, guilds and fraternities. The commissioners were instructed to take a full view of the goods, compare them with inventories previously made and to search for any that had been embezzled.⁽⁵⁶⁾

The Suffolk commission included 514 churches in their investigations. They had been ordered to sell everything except a chalice (two chalices were allowed for the cathedrals and larger churches). A sufficient stock of surplices and a minimum of altar linen was to be retained in each church. Even ready money could be taken by the commissioners, if found, and passed on to the Treasurer of the Mint.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Eye was among those larger churches which was allowed to keep two chalices and the 'boke off the Remyne of all the plate and Belles within the Countye of Suff' gives the following details for Eye:⁽⁵⁸⁾

Chalezes two, wayinge xxix oz ii qz
 Great Bells v
 Sawnce Bells i

This demonstrates vividly the tremendous reduction there had been in church valuables over the past few years. Eye Church must have seemed very naked and their disappearance would have been deeply offensive to those parishioners for whom time and tradition had hallowed these liturgical artefacts. It made little difference to them whether such appropriations were official or unofficial.

The next important official move was the appearance of the second English prayer book in 1552, an event which received equally scant comment from the vicar of Eye:

Memorandum, the secunde commyon booke was taken in the v^{te} yeare of Edward the syxte. (59)

Again, we do not know how readily Eye complied with the new regulation. Bungay did so immediately and it cost them 6s 8d to acquire the new book of common prayer.⁽⁶⁰⁾ This was but a drop in the ocean compared with the wider financial problems of the country, and among those who were now feeling the chill winds of the economic climate most severely were those ex-religious and ex-chantry priests whose pensions were beginning to fall seriously behind. There had already been some abuses among ex-monks and nuns who, because of financial constraints, had been forced to part with their pension patents in return for ready money and a major enquiry was conducted in 1552-3 involving those on the pension-list of the Court of Augmentations. Of the 800 ex-religious in these lists, over half were in some sort of arrears with their pensions; about two-thirds of these had not been paid for a year, and one-tenth for eighteen months or longer.⁽⁶¹⁾

The ex-Prior of Eye, William Hadley, was one of those who appeared before the commission of enquiry and, with the ex-Abbot of Leiston and the ex-Prioress of Redlingfield, he testified that he was

in receipt of his pension and that he had 'neyther solde or assignede' it. According to the fuller pension list made later during Mary's reign, William Hadley received £18 a year. (62)

It was about this time that the lay-schoolmaster of Eye left his post. Perhaps Robert Shene found it impossible to manage on the absurdly small stipend of £4 and when he was replaced by John Todd - another layman - the salary was suddenly increased to the much more realistic sum of £10 a year. (63)

Meanwhile, William Thrower continued to fuel the vicar's suspicions. This time it was outside the immediate ecclesiastical arena and concerned the land known locally as Fanner's, which had been left to the town by the fifteenth-century benefactor John Fiske. Faced once again with whispers of corruption and sickened by events of the past few years, Richard Thurkettle decided to clarify the whole position and on the last day of June 1553, just a week before the death of King Edward, he organised a detailed survey of the land in question.

He was accompanied on this survey by the then bailiffs, Robert London and Anthony Gissing, and some of the other local worthies (probably of the Twelve and Twenty-four) including William Herring, Augustine Seman, John Whetingham, William Knappe, John Thrower and Nicholas Dix. (The vicar's party was outnumbered on this occasion for, apart from the support of William Herring and possibly that of Augustine Seman, all the others seem to have been associates of William Thrower. John Thrower was William's son, Nicholas Dix his son-in-law; John Whetingham was a close friend and godfather to William's son John. William Knappe was of the 'Protestant' party and the bailiff, Robert London, was probably brother-in-law to the lay schoolmaster Robert Shene.) (64)

The vicar may have felt impotent on matters of liturgy but he was not beaten yet and there may well have been an element of spite in the enquiry he so determinedly initiated. If, in the atmosphere of Edwardian Protestantism, he could not impede the intractable Thrower's continuing progress, perhaps he could obstruct him through legal means.

Fanner's estate included several closes, a meadow, some pieces of arable land in Hay Field, pasture and pightles, amounting in all to some 107 acres.⁽⁶⁵⁾ William Thrower, it seems, held one of these pieces of land (known as Garres Pightle) which conveniently joined onto his own land and extended to land that had once belonged to the old Priory.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Richard Thurkettle cast doubts on William Thrower's legitimate holding of this land. The previous tenant, Thomas Wacce, had died in 1533 and

... afftre that how Thrower came by it Bayly Caton told William Heryng and Thomas Mollows and me.

The 1553 expedition was (not surprisingly in view of the participants) inconclusive and the confusion about William Thrower's claim to the land continued for some years. It was later declared, in 1558, that he showed the deeds of it to his friend John Whetingham during Easter week, although if his claim was genuine there seems to be no reason for him not to have demonstrated this fact simply by letting his accusers have sight of the deeds.⁽⁶⁷⁾ In 1559 the debate arose again and once more a survey was made of the land because it was stated by some that the earlier survey was not a true one. More people were present on this second survey but still the matter was not resolved, at least to Richard Thurkettle's satisfaction, and he continued to question Thrower's holding of the land ('by what auctoryetye wee can not tell').⁽⁶⁸⁾ However, the vicar was sure of one thing and that was that the conditions of the original lease were being disregarded. John Fiske, the donor, had instructed that the revenues coming from Garres Pightle should be given annually

to the twenty-nine poorest inhabitants of Eye. The money was to be distributed by the churchwardens on Good Fridays 'for ever' at the same time as prayers were said round the donor's grave in the churchyard ('wiche hathe a gret Free ston leid up on it').⁽⁶⁹⁾ It was probably during the muddle that followed the folding-up of chantry endowments that William Thrower acquired his interest in the land, and no doubt he would argue vigorously such old-fashioned conditions in these secular days no longer applied. For Richard Thurkettle, such assertions would hold little water. His mind was clear on the issue. William Thrower not only had no right to the land, he not only took for his own use all the good wood that was on it but, most important of all, he was depriving the needy folk and consequently 'deceyvythe the poore'. What is demonstrated here most vividly is the vicar's sense of isolation in what must have seemed to him his one-man battle on behalf of the forces of truth and goodness for

no man wull specke in it but I onelye.⁽⁷⁰⁾

Since most of our knowledge of William Thrower has come down to us through the filter of the vicar's somewhat jaundiced view, it is impossible to tell how just or unjust the picture is, but one of the rare glimpses of the vicar's enemy to come from other sources does not contradict the general impression. William Kettleburgh, who died at the height of the 1551 sweating sickness epidemic, had made his will the day before his death from which it appears that William Thrower (despite the alleged unofficial profits made by him from the recent sales of church plate) was in debt to William Kettleburgh for the sum of £10. The latter, clearly not over-confident about the payment of this sum, devised a method that more or less committed his debtor to its repayment and, in view of Thrower's apparent indifference towards the poor, has more than a touch of irony about it. William Kettleburgh willed that William Thrower should repay the £10 direct to the poor of Eye at the rate of 3s 4d a quarter, no doubt believing

that the pressure from local officials would more likely ensure completion of the debt. And in fact it did succeed. The quarterly payments continued for a number of years, after which it was decided to invest the rest of the money in three cows which would be leased out and the profits go to the poor. The first person to have the use of the cattle for the cost of 3s 4d a year was Robert Fuller, the sexton.⁽⁷¹⁾

In the meantime, amidst all the arguments about William Thrower's three acres, larger and more significant land transactions were taking place in the locality. Shortly before his death, the young King granted the Honour of Eye and the two parks at Eye to his sister, the Princess Mary.⁽⁷²⁾ Shortly afterwards, the Princess would almost certainly pass through the town itself on one of the most significant journeys of her life for, at the time of her brother's death on 6th July 1553, she was at Kenninghall in Norfolk, a confiscated residence of the imprisoned Duke of Norfolk, which was only about thirteen miles north-west of Eye.⁽⁷³⁾

Mary's accession to the throne was by no means straightforward and in Richard Thurkettle's book there is evidence that he was watching events very closely indeed. A letter which Mary sent from Kenninghall to the council in London claiming her succession and headed 'By the quene Marye' was carefully copied into the vicar's book. On the following page, in the same careful hand, is a copy of the council's reply, addressed pointedly to the 'ladye Marye', which rejected her claim to the throne, reminded her of her 'illegitimacy' and exhorted her to be a dutiful and obedient subject to the new Queen Jane.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Despite the council's hope that she would

cesse by ony pretence to vex and moleste any of our
Sovraiyne ladye the Quene Janes subjects drawynge them
frome the true faith and allegiance due unto her grace

Mary had already begun to gather loyal men around her. On 8th July, two days after Edward's death, she had written to Sir George Somerset, Sir William Drury, Sir William Waldegrave and Clement Heigham requiring their presence at Kenninghall. She left there on 12th July for Framlingham Castle, whose access to the sea was important should events require a hasty departure from English shores. Eye is about halfway between Kenninghall and Framlingham and, if she did pass through the town, it may have celebrated the monarch's presence in the traditional way with the ringing of church bells. As far as the vicar was concerned there was absolutely no doubt about who was the rightful Queen and in the parish register for 6th July, the day of Edward's death, he marked the beginning of the reign of Queen Mary. For him, the usurper Jane simply did not exist.

For Richard Thurkettle and the leading Catholic families of Eye, like the Goldings and the Herrings, it must have seemed like an undreamt of new dawn after the long dark night of the last twenty years in which the country had systematically destroyed its Catholic roots. The vicar's keen interest in events is evidenced by those two letters of Mary and the council recorded in his book. Just how one not very important Suffolk cleric managed to get hold of such information raises all sorts of speculation, but the most likely channel of access to this correspondence must surely have been Eye's near neighbour Sir Thomas Cornwallis who at the time was sheriff of both Norfolk and Suffolk and was among the gentry who flocked to support Mary and to swear loyalty to her. (75)

During those days in July many Suffolk men swore similar obedience to the new Queen and, in order to help recruitment of her army to oppose the Earl of Oxford and Lord Rich, her advisers ordered all Suffolk gaols to be emptied. For the prisoners languishing in Eye gaol it was an unexpected and unlooked-for liberty and on the 21st all captains were ordered to bring their men

to a muster under Sir William Drury and Sir William Waldegrave. The churchwardens' accounts at Cratfield show clearly just what was happening at the local level and include at least fifteen separate entries referring to the provision of arrows, various garments for soldiers, armour, swords, the refurbishing of the town's sword, the re-blading of the town's dagger and the despatching of the town's bow to Framlingham.⁽⁷⁶⁾ There are fewer details in Eye, but the accounts of the chamberlains reveal that similar preparations were taking place there and one entry refers to the

stowring of harnesse whan the Quene cam to hyr reigne.⁽⁷⁷⁾

Suffolk's support of Mary arose largely from her unquestionable legal right to the crown rather than from religious affiliations, although some of her leading adherents, like Sir Thomas Cornwallis, supported her on those grounds too. (Like everywhere else in England, Suffolk was split in religious sympathy, but it is generally thought to have been more Protestant than Catholic in its overall outlook.) None of the Suffolk men who surrounded the Queen could have guessed at the degree of bigotry mingled with idealism and genuine devotion which composed Mary's make-up, and indeed it did seem at that stage that she intended to show respect for individual consciences. As she said in August to the Mayor of London, she meant

not to compel or strain men's consciences otherwise than God should, as she trusted, put into their hearts a persuasion of the truth that she is in, through the opening of His Word unto them by the godly and virtuous and learned preachers. ⁽⁷⁸⁾

And it is probably true that, until her marriage with Philip of Spain, a peaceful restoration to Rome was all she contemplated.

Once safely on the throne, she did not forget the men of Suffolk who helped to put her there and several members of her council came from the county; many of them were to be notable recusants during the reign of her sister. They included Lord Wentworth, Sir Edward Waldegrave, Sir Henry Jerningham (captain of the Guard),

Sir William Cordall, Sir Clement Heigham, Sir Nicholas Hare and Sir Thomas Cornwallis. (His wife Anne was made one of the Queen's Ladies of the Bedchamber.)(79)

Mary's gratitude to Sir Thomas set him out on what promised to be a very successful career in the royal service. In 1554 he was appointed Treasurer of Calais and in 1557 Comptroller of the Queen's Household. Through him, Eye now had very close contacts at Court and was nearer the heart of the state machine than it had ever been before.

Whatever the trepidations of Suffolk people might have been as they faced yet another onslaught of reversals in religious belief and practice, there can be no doubting that for Richard Thurkettle, the Goldings, the Herrings and their associates, the relief must have been almost overwhelming. Now in 1553 the nightmare was over, the vicissitudes had finally ended. A monarch who thought as they did now sat safely on the throne of England and the true faith re-kindled was once more about to illumine the dark corners and bereft stones of their empty Church of St Peter.

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Deaths are presumed to be 'young' when the deceased person is described as the son or daughter of someone, i.e. before they are married. There were, of course, some adult unmarried people but they were relatively rare and were often denoted as such, e.g. 'spinster'. However, these figures should only be seen as an indication of a particular trend rather than an accurate statistic.
54. A. G. Dickens, op cit, 349
55. VCH, II, 34
56. Patrick McGrath & Joy Rowe, The Recusancy of Sir Thomas Cornwallis, Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 28 (1961) 228
57. VCH, II, 34
A. G. Dickens, op cit, 349-50
58. The East Anglian or Notes & Queries, New Series, Vol 3 (1889-90) 114
59. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20v
60. Bungay Accounts, 1552
61. VCH, II, 32
A. G. Dickens, op cit, 317, 206-7
62. VCH, II, 32
Geoffrey Baskerville, Married Clergy and Pensioned Religious in Norwich Diocese 1555, English Historical Review, Vol 48 (1933) 226
In Cardinal Pole's full pension list, the amount distributed to various pensioners in Suffolk amounted to over £600. The ex-Abbot of Leiston received £20 a year and the ex-Prioress of Redlingfield received £13 6s 8d.
63. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f19v

64. Ellen London, who was probably Robert's sister, married Robert Shene in 1542
65. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f8
66. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f19v
67. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f35v
68. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f8, f19v-20
69. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f8
70. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20
71. Will of William Kettleburgh, 1551
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/B/10/3(f)
72. Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward VI, Vol 5, 1547-1553
(London, 1926) 176 (3rd May 1553)
73. Patrick McGrath & Joy Rowe, op cit, 228
74. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f26v-27
75. Patrick McGrath & Joy Rowe, op cit, 228
76. Cratfield Accounts, 82-3
77. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/L1/4(g), Chamberlains' Accounts, 1553
78. VCH, II, 183
79. ibid
Patrick McGrath & Joy Rowe, op cit, 229

Chapter 7

MARIAN REACTION

The Restoration of Catholicism

In the Queen's first parliament, the ecclesiastical legislation of Edward VI was immediately repealed, although Mary did not get things all her own way and a large minority in the Commons actually voted against the repeal. Parliament refused to rescind the royal supremacy and the Queen frequently placed a non-committal 'etc' after her secular titles. As Professor Dickens comments

... once the first rejoicings had subsided, Mary began to receive some sharp reminders from this sober political world. Parliament would accept a return to the last years of Henry VIII but not a return to the Middle Ages. ⁽¹⁾

The division within the Commons mirrored what was happening in the country and, after two decades of uncertainty, no region was entirely consistent in its religious outlook. The factions in Eye are clear enough, but Dr. Margaret Spufford's study of five villages in Cambridgeshire shows that even much smaller communities were bitterly divided. When the vicar of Orwell, himself a married man, poked fun at the mass he was about to reintroduce, some of the parishioners supported him but others were deeply offended by his attitude. ⁽²⁾ Roger Edgeworth's concern about lack of religious unity did not only apply to Bristol where he happened to be preaching.

Here among you ... som will heare masse, some will heare none by theyr good wils, som will be Shriven, some wil not, but for feare, or els for shame, some wyll pay tithes & offeringes, som wil not ... Som wil prairie for the dead, som wil not, I heare of much suche discension among you. ⁽³⁾

Religious bewilderment in the first year or two of Mary's reign must have been unparalleled. Back came the altars which had only just been removed, back came lights and roods and cloths and vestments and images and the whole miscellany of fittings and furniture

and apparatus which accompanied the restoration of the Catholic mass. In its denuded state, St Peter's of Eye would have found itself in a similar position to another church which complained of

the lack of things necessary for the setting forth (of)
divine service. (4)

In some areas the confiscated church goods of the previous regime had not yet been despatched to London and commissioners were instructed to return such property to its own parish to enable a swift return to Catholic normality. At Bungay during that first year of the new reign, the high altar of St Mary's was once more erected. It cost 3s 8d for eleven bushels of lime, 2s 4d for the mason's work and 18d for his assistant. Lights were re-introduced and three pounds of candles acquired for the church windows; two latten candlesticks, costing 12s, were bought to go with them. In the parish of Cratfield, 2s was paid to the 'stayner for makyng of the Roode', 12d to Gregory Rowse 'for makyng of a pully for the Sacrament' to suspend the eucharist over the altar and 6d for fetching the altar table from the vicarage barn. Cratfield's altar had obviously not been destroyed and it is quite likely that its counterpart in Eye, which had also been preserved, had been stored in a similar place. (5)

During Mary's second year the feverish activity continued. At Bungay at least thirty-two items can be identified in the accounts of the churchwardens as relating specifically to the restoration of Catholicism. These included making and painting the canopy and providing a new canopy cloth; making 'pendawnts' with Spanish silk that cost 5s, and working on the altar. A glazier was brought in to mend all the windows; a veil was put up before the altar; 'pricketts' before the rood loft, and 20s spent on a new legend. Subsequent years at Bungay record continuing efforts to bring their church in line with the rehabilitated spiritual practices: 10s was spent in re-writing St Thomas's 'storie' which was before 'raced'; linen

cloth was bought for the crucifix and a cross of timber for Lent; a stole of red velvet was acquired, the Lenten cross re-painted, a pulley made to draw up the cloth before the crucifix, and three new images bought in 1557 at a cost of 46s 8d. The obsolete Edwardian service books were taken to Beccles and even as late as 1558 workmen were still fixing up the images and completing other odd jobs.⁽⁶⁾

The picture at Bungay is of a fairly rapid and willing restoration of Catholic ceremonies, but in other areas progress was more tardy. In Kent, for example, by 1557 almost a fifth of the churches still had no high altar, a tenth no rood and a quarter no cross. The disruptions of Edward's reign had left the fabric of many churches in a deplorable state and it was no easy task to remedy the deficiencies. Valuable ornaments and precious silver had been jettisoned and the cost of re-equipping the churches was formidable. Both Eye and Bungay were having to be satisfied with much cheaper equipment to replace the former riches. One way of raising money was to hold a church ale and the parish of Walton was one of many which did just that 'for the new adorning of the church'. Collections at Prescott in Lancashire raised £4 8s in order to put lights before the images again, after which annual donations ensured that they kept burning.⁽⁷⁾

There are few details about what was happening at Eye during these first years of Mary's reign and the absence of evidence is significant for Richard Thurkettle was always quick to record that which displeased him but rarely recounted his satisfactions. His silence suggests he was well contented (and perhaps busy) and even the visitation of Bishop John Hopton to the town in 1555 passed without comment.⁽⁸⁾

One aspect of the disruptions that Eye was spared at this time was a change of priest. In 1553 the revived obligation to celibacy came into force and by the following spring the formal deprivations of all the married clergy in Suffolk began to take place.⁽⁹⁾ Mary

could ill afford to apply too Draconian a measure on the question of married priests since she could not risk losing a large proportion of her clergy, so the offenders were told simply to separate from their putative wives and (if they agreed) offered other benefices. The list of Marian deprivations in the Diocese of Norwich includes two of the former monks of Eye Priory who had taken holy orders and also John Page, vicar of Laxfield.⁽¹⁰⁾ During Elizabeth's reign he would first become vicar of Cratfield and then, after the death of Richard Thurkettle, vicar of Eye: the first married clergyman the town was to encounter. The vicar of adjacent Brome, Robert Randolph, was also deprived of his living for having married, as was Thomas Boningfant of nearby Hinderclay who was probably one of the ex-schoolmasters of Eye School.⁽¹¹⁾

If the people of Eye were not particularly stretched on the subject of wedded clergy, it would nevertheless be valuable to know their reactions to that rather more significant marriage in 1554 between Queen Mary and Philip of Spain. It was extremely unpopular on the whole, not only with Parliament and a large portion of the population but also with at least a third of Mary's privy council. The Marian state papers are full of reports of sedition and discontent and the risings that did take place seem largely to have been political rather than religious in nature. When Wyatt's men of Kent marched on London, it was hatred of the Spaniard that motivated them and when they were confronted with the London militia, the rebels began shouting 'We are all Englishmen' - which persuaded the militia to defect to the other side.⁽¹²⁾

November of that same year saw the arrival in England of Cardinal Pole as papal legate. He absolved the realm from its schism with Rome and all the statutes against papal authority since 1529 were repealed.⁽¹³⁾ By the following February the burnings for heresy had begun.

Dr. Rowland Taylor was among the first of the victims. He was burned at Hadleigh in Suffolk and his death was followed by a steady line of Protestant heretics from the county. Foxe estimated that thirty-six people from Suffolk lost their lives during Mary's reign but, in his list of 'such as were burned for religion', Strype puts the number at nearer twenty-one.⁽¹⁴⁾ Most of the exiles and martyrs of Mary's reign came from the six counties of Middlesex, Kent, Sussex, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk: of 300 people who were burned, over three-quarters of them came from these counties. Some of this, of course, may be put down to the enthusiasm of the local authorities in searching out heretics. Certainly in Suffolk, the sheriff was the zealous Sir John Sulyard with his two equally dedicated assistants, Sir William Drury and Sir Clement Heigham. Sulyard's recusancy during Elizabeth's reign might not have been quite so noticeable had it not been for his eagerness to track down and burn Protestant heretics in the mid-fifties. But neither lay nor episcopal efficiency can entirely explain away the strong Protestantism of the home counties and East Anglia. London had the largest number of known underground Protestant congregations during Mary's reign and it paid for this dubious record with sixty-seven burnings. Colchester, as a town notorious for its role as a 'harbourer of heretics', came next. The majority of martyrs came from humbler occupations - craftsmen, labourers and artisans. (Those better off were able to flee the country: nearly all of the 350 people known to have found refuge on the continent were gentlemen, merchants or clerics.)⁽¹⁵⁾ These craft or labouring groups had long been subject to radical religious influences - a further confirmation of residual Lollardy forming a background to the Reformation.

Despite its own Lollard history and notorious heretics, Eye did not produce any more Protestant martyrs in the 1550s, although its gaol played a prominent part in the capture of heretics from the immediate vicinity. Thomas Spicer, a labourer from Winston, which

is a village a few miles south of Eye, was taken from his bed at dawn by three men because he would not hear mass or receive the sacrament. On the orders of Sir John Tirrell, a local JP, and other justices, he was removed to Eye gaol to await his examination before the Chancellor of the Diocese. This took place eventually at Beccles where the Chancellor was fervent in his attempts to persuade Spicer and the other heretics with him to change their minds.

Wherefore, minding in the end to give sentence on him, he (i.e. the Chancellor) burst out in tears, entreating them to remember themselves, and to turn again to the holy mother church ... Now as he was thus labouring them and seemed very loth to read the sentence (for they were the first that he condemned in that diocese), the registrar there sitting by, being weary belike of tarrying, or else perceiving the constant martyrs to be at a point, called upon the chancellor in haste to rid them out of the way, and to make an end. At the which words, the chancellor read the condemnation over them with tears, and delivered them to the secular power. (16)

Despite the Chancellor's obvious compassion, Thomas Spicer was burned at Beccles with two other men on 21st May 1556.

Not so compassionate was the JP, Sir John Tirrell of Gipping. He was positively enthusiastic in his rounding-up of Protestant heretics, most of whom he sent on to the gaol at Eye for safe keeping. (The Tirrells were a prominent local family and, in fact, Lady Tirrell, who was a good friend of Richard Thurkettle, subsequently married Nicholas Cutler of Eye.) Sir John Tirrell's name occurs frequently in Foxe's records for this period and he was directly responsible for at least three other local heretics who were kept at Eye gaol in 1556 and 1557. These were Adam Foster, Robert Lawson and John Noyes.

Adam Foster was a young married man of 26. He was a husbandman from Mendlesham and Sir John Tirrell had him imprisoned at Eye for his refusal to attend church or hear mass. Eventually he was sent onto Norwich where he was condemned to death by the Bishop. He was burned at Bury.

Robert Lawson was a single man of thirty and his trade was that of linen-weaver. He too had refused to go to church and hear mass, but also he had been less than cautious in his speech, speaking openly of 'Popish idols'. Sir John Tirrell ordered his arrest and imprisonment at Eye and he too was subsequently burned at Bury. In Foxe's inimitable style, Robert Lawson, Adam Foster and another heretic, Roger Bernard, ended their lives

most triumphantly ... in such happy and blessed condition as did notably set forth their constancy and joyful end, to the great praise of God, and their commendation in hym, and also to the encouragement of others in the same quarrel to do the like. (17)

One who was thus encouraged was John Noyes from nearby Laxfield. Foxe describes in detail the processes by which this particular heretic was captured. The chief constable of Hoxne hundred and the two under-constables of Laxfield - considered to be faithful Catholics - were called before Sir John Sulyard, the high sheriff, and other leading justices, including Sir John Tirrell. This took place at Hoxne and the constables were ordered by the justices to make enquiries in their own town if any parishioners failed to attend the services or hear the mass. If any such were found, then the constables were to examine the causes of their neglect of worship and bring a 'true certificate' to the justices within fourteen days. Foxe then records how the three constables 'being full of hatred against the truth, and desirous to get promotion' arranged among themselves to implicate John Noyes.

This divellish enterprise agreed upon ... his house was beset on both sides. This done, they found the said John Noyes on the backside of the said house going outward; and Nicholas Stannard (i.e. one of the constables) called to the said John, and said, 'Whither goest thou?' And he said, 'To my neighbours'. And the said Nicholas Stannard said, 'Your master hath deceived you; you must go with us now'. But the said John Noyes answered, 'No, but take you heed your master deceive not you'. And so they took him and carried him to the justices the next day. After his appearance, and sundry causes alleged, the justices and the sheriff together cast him into Eye-dungeon ...

From there Noyes was despatched to Norwich to appear before the Bishop, during which examination he denied the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine, saying he thought 'the natural body of Christ to be only in heaven'. He was at this time being kept at the Guildhall in Norwich and it was there he was visited by his brother-in-law, Nicholas Fisk of Dennington, who asked about the causes of his condemnation. According to Foxe, John Noyes 'wrote with his own hand' the following:

I said ... that I could not believe that in the sacrament of the altar there is the natural body of Christ, the same body that was born of the Virgin Mary. But I said, that the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ is received of christian people in the remembrance of Christ's death, as a spiritual food, if it be ministered according to Christ's institution.

But they said, I could not tell what spiritual meant.

The bishop said, that the sacrament was God, and must be worshipped as God. So said the chancellor also.

Then answered I, 'My lord, I cannot so believe'. 'Then', quoth the bishop, 'why? Then say thou dost believe.' Notwithstanding these collusions could not prevail.

So John Noyes was sent back to Eye prison where he remained until midnight on 21st September. He was then taken to his native Laxfield to be burned and on the following morning was brought to the stake. Foxe's description of these events provides a dramatic picture of one small village's reaction to the martyrdom of one of its sons.

Now the fire in most places of the street was put out, saving a smoke was espied by the said Thomas Lovel (i.e. the high constable) proceeding out from the top of a chimney, to which house the sheriff and Grannow his man went, and brake open the door, and thereby got fire, and brought the same to the place of execution. When John Noyes came to the place where he should be burnt, he kneeled down and said the 50th Psalm, with other prayers; and then they, making haste, bound him to the stake. And being bound, the said John Noyes said, 'Fear not them that can kill the body, but fear him that can kill both body and soul, and cast it into everlasting fire.'

When he saw his sister weeping, and making moan for him, he bade her that she should not weep for him, but weep for her sins.

Then one Nicholas Cadman, being hastler, a valiant champion in the pope's affairs, brought a faggot and set against him; and the said John Noyes took up the

faggot and kissed it, and said, 'Blessed be the time that ever I was born to come to this.' ... And so the fire was kindled, and burnt about him. Then he said, 'Lord have mercy upon me! Christ have mercy upon me! Son of David have mercy upon me!'

And so he yielded up his life. And when his body was burned, they made a pit to bury the coals and ashes, and amongst the same they found one of his feet that was unburnt, whole up to the ankle, with the hose on; and that they buried with the rest.

Now while he was a burning, there stood one John Jarvis by, a man's servant of the same town, a plain fellow, which said, 'Good Lord, how the sinews of his arms shrink up!' And there stood behind him one Grannow, and Benet, being the sheriff's men, and they said to their master, that John Jarvis said, 'What villain wretches are these!' And their master bade lay hand on him, and they took him and pinioned him, and carried him before the justice that same day; and the justice did examine him of the words aforesaid; but he denied them, and answered that he said nothing but this, 'Good Lord, how the sinews of his arms shrink up!' But, for all this, the justice did bind his father and his master in five pounds a-piece, that he should be forthcoming at all times.

And on the Wednesday next he was brought again before the justices, master Thurston and master Kene, they sitting at Fressingfield in Hoxne hundred; and there they did appoint and command, that the said John Jarvis should be set in the stocks the next market-day, and whipt about the market, naked. But his master, one William Jarvis, did after crave friendship of the constables; and they did not set him in the stocks till Sunday morning. And in the afternoon they did whip him about the market with a dog-whip, having three cords; and so they let him go. Some do give out, that John Jarvis was whipt for saying that Nicholas Cadman was Noye's hastler; that is, such an one as maketh and hasteth the fire. (18)

Such stories as these flying around the neighbourhood, as well as the comings and goings at Eye gaol, acted as grim warning to the Protestants in Eye about the implications of their beliefs and they were left in no doubts as to the severity of the Marian regime. It was against this background of Catholic revival that the balance of power between radicals and conservatives in the town once more shifted. The year 1556 saw the re-emergence of the old problems surrounding the post of schoolmaster.

The present master was John Todd, a layman who had held the post for about three years. His sudden departure coincided with an ominous

confrontation between leading 'Protestant' councillors and the Bishop of Norwich.⁽¹⁹⁾ It may well have been Richard Thurkettle who drew the Bishop's attention to the situation prevailing in Eye in which a layman was acting in a capacity he believed should belong solely to an ordained priest. Purgatory was official doctrine once more and the original chantry purpose of the school's foundation would consequently be reinstated. Certainly it must have been with some satisfaction that the vicar copied into his private book the official episcopal correspondence with the erring town officials of Eye.

The Bishop had written to the bailiffs several times urging them to replace their current schoolmaster with a priest, but his letters had been ignored. Finally, in September 1556, he indicated in rather more threatening tones that his patience was at an end. His letter was delivered to the bailiffs (John Thurkettle and William Thrower) on Michaelmas Day, and it also included the names of Robert London, James Seman, Humphrey Knevet, Edward Torold, Robert Thurston and Robert Shene - all of whom were or had been prominent office-holders in Eye. Robert London was a yeoman and he was bailiff of the town in 1547 and 1551; he had also been churchwarden. James Seman was a mercer and in his time had been chamberlain, constable and churchwarden. Humphrey Knevet acted as chamberlain and twice as bailiff during the fifties, and Edward Torold was churchwarden in 1535 and again in 1548. William Thrower was, of course, the vicar's old adversary. He appears to have been churchwarden twice and bailiff at least three times.

The tone of the Bishop's letter evoked immediate action and, perhaps with the fate of several local heretics in mind, these recalcitrant men of Eye instantly agreed to instal a priest as schoolmaster. John Todd was hastily removed from his post.

It was a considerable victory for Richard Thurkettle and his fellow-Catholics, although hardly a surprising one against the

background of the times. Responsibility for the school reverted to the church, although a compromise seems to have been reached which did give to the bailiffs an element of choice (along with the vicar) in selecting the schoolmaster.

Perhaps encouraged by this success and secure in the knowledge of a restored and flourishing Catholicism, it was probably about this time that Richard Thurkettle began to compile his evidence of the various corruptions which had taken place over the past few years. As we have already seen, the name of William Thrower features prominently in the vicar's account, as do Robert London and Thomas Blow who were also implicated in what he clearly saw as heretical activities. Psychological motivation is, of course, impossible to determine and we shall never know if the vicar's very real antipathy towards William Thrower sprang from a profound difference of opinion on religious matters, a personal vendetta or whether, in fact, his suspicions of corruption were well-founded.

Whatever the truth of this, the vicar of Eye was going from strength to strength. These auspicious years of the middle fifties were probably the only time in over thirty years of pastoral service that Richard Thurkettle was able to enjoy a situation in which his country's official policy most nearly reflected what he felt in his heart to be deeply true, when his external actions and words for the first time harmonised with his inner world.

And in addition to all this, he now had friends in high places. Sir Thomas Cornwallis was active at the court of Queen Mary and he spoke personally with Cardinal Pole on behalf of the vicar of Eye about the possibility of uniting the vicarage and the parsonage and thus incorporating their revenues. (This is the first and only reference in the Eye records to a parsonage in the town.) The Cardinal was sympathetic to this proposal and agreed to it on condition that the Bishop of Norwich was consulted and also gave his agreement.

Sir Thomas Cornwallis duly wrote to the Bishop from the court on 21st June 1557 explaining the matter to him. He described Eye as a 'veraye poore and populus town' and expressed his hope that the Bishop would find it in his heart to agree to 'so godly an acte' as the bringing together of the vicarage and parsonage.⁽²⁰⁾ His optimism was not ill-founded and the Bishop sent his agreement in a letter to Cardinal Pole - although not until 11th August, after some weeks had elapsed, for which he first apologised.

... Wherupon lesse my Sylence herynne shuld by Anye meane hynndre so good A mocon, and your Graces so godly disposicon, I have addressed thes my letters to the same, Certifyeng first as towchyng the untyng of the parsonage to the vicreage afore seid that I thynke it veray convenyent beyng credibly enformed that the seid Eye is a veray poore and populus towne And the lyvyng for the vicar ther ferre insuffycient to meyntheyne a convenyent mynyster to serve in so greate a towne, Wher now one Richard Thurketyll ther Master of Arte beyng of lx yeares age is vycar and hathe long tyme contynewed there, And is a man well worthye to Receyve suche a benefyghte as the parsonage ther wiche is of the yerly renew of xiiili vi^s viiid, Wherby he mowght be able to meyntheyne some hospitalyte ther, whiche were verye convenyent for the better Relieffe of his poore parischeners, And yett the same is now omyttyd throw lack of lyvyng ...

The Bishop then touched on another issue raised by Sir Thomas concerning the parson of Brome (who had replaced the previous one deprived of his living because of marriage) and concluded his letter with a confirmation of the good character of both Richard Thurkettle and his counterpart in Brome.

And furder I certyfy your Grace that the persons before namyd were never maryed or professed in any religion but have contynewed secular prestes honestly behavyng them selves from tyme to tyme unto this present. (21)

The additional income of over £13 a year was a considerable bonus for the vicar of Eye and he may well have been genuine in his desire to put some of it to good use since his writings consistently reflect a concern for the poor. In the light of this windfall, the chamberlains' failure yet again to pay him tithe for the common pasture land was perhaps less apparent. (This annual sum of 2s 8d for the land known locally as 'the moor' had been paid regularly until

the late thirties and early forties when certain chamberlains had refused to pay tithes.) The chamberlains in 1557 were Edmund Gobole and Thomas London and they too refused to pay. Thomas London was the son of Robert London, a prominent member of the 'Protestant' faction, and he was later described by Edward Golding as 'impudent' and 'malicious'.⁽²²⁾

Evidently neither the official renewal of Catholicism nor the severe punishments meted out to heretics had persuaded those of strong Protestant inclinations to renounce their allegiance and perhaps the only way left to demonstrate their feelings was in small acts of disobedience like these. But by this time in Mary's reign they must have been feeling very gloomy about the future. The Queen would in all likelihood bear a Catholic heir and that brief flowering of Protestantism would be assigned to the history books merely as an interesting anachronism. Certainly the Church was beginning to look quite different from its appearance only a few years before, although an inventory made by the vicar in December 1557 reveals an impoverished echo of its much earlier grandeur.

Although some of the vessels and ornaments had been replaced in the last four years, when we compare the 1557 inventory with the earlier one of 1525 it is clear that quite a number had not. Among the plate that was lost during the Reformation upheavals were six chalices, two silver pax, two silver 'cyrettes', a silver pyx, a silver 'ship' and a silver spoon. The earlier inventory had described the cross which had been sold at Norwich during Edward's reign, but by 1557 two new crosses had been acquired. The two silver candlesticks (probably those given originally by John Fiske) had been replaced by much cheaper ones for the two pairs of candlesticks listed in the 1557 inventory were valued at only 2s 9d. Two pairs of chalices appear to have survived the Reformation changes, although another two pairs had been sold in 1548. Two silver censers had also

been sold but by 1557 had been replaced with new ones. A new chrismatory valued at 5s took the place of the earlier silver one, but there is no trace of the silver pax. (One of the two belonging to the Church was sold off by the churchwardens, but there is no record of the other.) A comparison of the two inventories shows that very little of the original plate escaped the sales by churchwardens, appropriation by government or destruction by zealous vandals.

Vestments, cloths and books seem to have fared a little better. Four out of five altar cloths survived, although nine 'pieces' of altar cloth for use during Lent disappeared. Two cross cloths and several houseling cloths were also rescued. Of six vestments described in the earlier inventory, three appear in the later list; but only two copes of the original nine were recovered. Other vestments and cloths which appear in the 1557 list must have been acquired subsequently for they cannot with any certainty be matched with the earlier inventory: they include a red and green cope, four cushions, one 'pyped clothe of whyght', eight surplices, one 'veye clothe' valued at 12s, three 'short cowells', a 'peynted clothe before the allter', valued at 9s, and a canopy cloth.

The cloths and vestments which did survive the turmoils would have been easier to conceal than the ornaments and utensils and the same would probably apply to books. The Marian inventory includes details of three antiphoners, one printed manual, four processioners, two mass books, four grails and one 'old brokyn grayle'. Books were not included in the 1525 list so we do not know which of these were part of the original pre-Reformation collection. However, certain items on the 1557 inventory are given a price or value which suggests they had recently been acquired and, since none of the books is priced at all, it is quite likely they had been stored away in safety for possible future use - despite the 1549 Act which had ordered churchwardens to deliver all these old service books to the

Bishop for destruction.⁽²³⁾ Other Church contents which had been re-purchased for the Catholic revival included thirteen painted images (costing 12s), a sepulchre (4s) and three 'postes for an herese to stande abowte the sepulchre' for 6s 8d. Some of these goods seem to have been acquired from local people for a note against the 1557 inventory indicates that Knyffet and Beker 'sold these ii to the chirche'. 'Knyffet' was probably Humphrey Knevet, who was one of those summoned to appear before the Bishop the previous year to answer questions about the schoolmaster. 'Beker' may have been John Beker, one of the 1540 chamberlains who refused to pay tithes. The evidence is undoubtedly slim, but the personal history of both these men indicate 'Protestant' persuasion and suggests that, among those parishioners willing to buy up the old church goods, had been those of reformed sympathies who could presumably find a practical use for them. Evidence from other parishes suggests it was not at all unusual for pre-Reformation church vessels to find their way to local dining tables and in the same way these Eye parishioners had taken advantage of the Edwardian wholesale abandonment of church contents.⁽²⁴⁾

By 1557 then Catholicism was fully restored in Eye. The School was once more under the tutelage of a priest with the municipal authorities firmly in second place; the vicar was benefiting from the amalgamation of parsonage and vicarage, growing increasingly confident in this resurgence of the true faith; the ancient practices and processions had been reinstated; and the Church was participating fully in the old Catholic services, only its outward impoverishment serving as a reminder of the disturbances it had endured.

The leading Catholic families, like the vicar himself, must have been immensely satisfied with the way things were going, although at this time the Goldings had more personal difficulties to preoccupy them. Their mother, Christian, had been ill for sometime and this

had especially involved Agnes who was still single and living at home. In her will, Christian makes mention of the

naturall love dutie & paynfull servyce that my dawghter
Agnes Golding hath used towards me during the tyme of
my sycknes ...

It also appears that Edward had gone to some trouble and expense in trying to find help for his mother's illness and she also refers to

suche charge as my son Edward Golding hath susteyned &
bere during the tyme of my saule sicknes & his travell
in seking of counsell for the Recoverie of my helth ...

These personal incidents are a timely reminder that in history, which assigns with facility whole years and even decades to a few lines, the real sense of time passing is often lost. The whole of Christian Golding's married life and the bringing up of her five children had taken place against a background of considerable instability. On whichever side of the fence they found themselves, people of her own and Richard Thurkettle's generation had spent their entire adult lives dominated by change and turmoil. In 1557 the future looked brighter for them than it had done for twenty or thirty years, but Christian Golding barely had time to enjoy it for before May was out she was dead.

But what of the younger people of Eye? When Mary came to the throne many of them had grown up knowing nothing other than Protestant beliefs and Protestant services. Mary Torold, for example, the daughter of Edward (a leading member of the 'Protestant' group) was almost fifteen at the time of the Queen's accession and by now in 1557 she was nineteen. Thomas Roser, Christine Reede, Elizabeth Manistrie, Julian Sowgate - all sons and daughters with familiar Eye surnames - were much the same age. Their reaction to the strange new spectacle of Catholic worship with all its accoutrements and especially its unfamiliar language was probably one of astonishment, but once again the only evidence to come out of Eye at this time is from the wills of the older and established residents.

In this five-year period there are twenty-one extant wills (compared with only nine for the previous five years under Edward) and the picture they suggest is of a town fully adapted to the practice of Catholicism. Of the twenty-one wills, sixteen open with a declaration of faith in the traditional Catholic style - like Lewes Harvey, a haberdasher by trade and uncle to Edward Golding (on his mother's side), who commended his soul to almighty God and to the holy company of heaven. The majority of wills make a similar statement from which it is impossible to infer just how deep or otherwise their Catholic sympathies were. However, they were clearly not convinced Protestants since the wills of those people leave us in no doubt whatsoever.

James Seman, for example, was from a leading Eye family. He was a mercer and, in his time, had served as chamberlain, constable and churchwarden. (He was one of those ordered to appear before the Bishop in 1556 on the matter of the schoolmaster.) His father Symonde and his brother Augustine had been devout Catholics - Symonde arranging in his will in the late twenties for the last ever trental to be heard in Eye. Augustine had died in 1555 and he too had remained a faithful son of the true faith, leaving his soul to

god allmyghtye and to o^r blyssed Ladye St marye & to
all the holye companye of heaven.

He had remembered the poor, bequeathing them forty shillings on the day of his burial and bread on his seventh and thirtieth days. In addition, he requested his own son Robert to

praye for me and for all my fryndes sowles and for
all Christian sowles.

James Seman, however, looked at life - and death - very differently. The preamble to his will is a rare example of a passionate declaration of personal faith, which is quite different in tone from the earlier will of William Shepard of Mendlesham which was a rational and objective analysis of Protestant theology.⁽²⁵⁾

First I bequeath & comende my Sowle into the handes of allmyghtye god the father the Sone & the holye ghoost beyng iii persones in Trynyte and one god in essens & allso to all the celestyall companye of Sayntes in heaven suerlye trustynge & undowbtedlye belevyng thoroughe y^e death & passyon of o^r Savyor Jesus Chryst to be remytted & pardoned of all my synes which I moost wretched Syner most grevoslye have comitted & done agaynst hys dyvyne majesty beyng hartelye sorye therfore and even from y^e botome of my harte moost earnestlye doe repente me y^t I have so often offendyd hym & broken hys comaundymmentes beseching hym of mercye & forgyvenes and that after the transmutacon of this mortall lyfe to graunte me the fruytyon of his dyvyne presence and this do I protest unto all the worlde wyllynglye to dye & departe this myserable worlde when soever yt shall please god to call me renowncyng & abhorryng all this mundane & vayne goodes & Rytches utterlye forsakyng them & puttyng my holl truste & confydence in his mercye intendyng by his grace & goodnes from hence forth & hereafter to leade a new lyfe & to be in charytye w^t all men & to walke in his wayes unto my lyves ende ...

The influence of the Edwardian prayer book on James Seman's profession of faith is conspicuous; either it had entered deeply into his soul or he had retained access to it in contravention of the present laws of the country. James Seman had no children and to his wife Anne he left most of his tenements and lands, including a shop in Eye market. Anne was to give to six poor children 'yche of them a cote clothe'. She herself was a fervent Protestant and when she died a year or two later her will expressed the hope that she would be received into the company of God's 'most dere and elect people'.

The only other will to disclose a Protestant outlook during Mary's reign was that of John Cossye and his too demonstrates a significantly personal expression of faith which shows the influence of vernacular scripture.

Fyrst & before all other thinges I comytte me unto god and to his mercie trusting without any Dowte or mystrust that by his grace & meryts of Jesus Chryste & by the vertue of his passion & of his myghtie Resurrection I have & shall have Remyssion of my synnes & Resurrection of bodye & Sowle according as is wrytten I believe that my Redemer lyveth & that in the last Daye I shall Ryse out of the erthe & my Fleshe shall se my Savyour this my hope is layde up in my besome.

John Cossye left several bequests to the poor of local villages, including 26s 8d which was to be distributed among the poor of Eye by his executors

so that I do it not by my lyfe as shalbe openlye knowen.

Despite the assertive Protestant tone of his preamble, the residue of his goods were to be disposed of by his executors 'for the welth of my Sowle whereas is most nede'. Even in the recesses of this firm Protestant's mind there lurked a residual Catholicism which shows all too clearly that rigid categories are simply not appropriate when it comes to personal faith and spirituality.

These two wills, perhaps even a little defiant in tone, were the only overtly Protestant ones for the whole of Mary's reign. Of the twenty-one that survive for this period, three come under the heading of 'indeterminate'. (These include Christian Golding's will in which she left her soul simply to the mercy of God: however, our knowledge of the Catholic Goldings suggests she would probably be far from indeterminate in her beliefs.) The remaining sixteen can be classified as in the traditional mode. Of them, four make specific references to Mary and also include gifts to the church and to the high altar: Robert Lockwode gave 2s 'toward the making of the organs' and Thomas Barker ordered bread, cheese and beer to be distributed to the poor on his burial day, his seventh day and his thirtieth day. Nicholas Rayner, a singleman, also left generous bequests to the poor, including 40s to the needy in Eye and £6 to the poor of another town

for this Intente that they do praye for me my father & mothers sowles & all other my fryndes & benefactors.

He left 4d to a 'Spittle howse or Laser howse' in Norwich in order that the soul of Annes Barne be prayed for - and in fact four of the Marian wills reveal an explicit belief in purgatory.

Wills are, of course, notoriously unreliable when trying to discern a testator's doctrinal attitude since many people probably used the traditional formulae with very little thought. However,

it is unlikely that anyone would allow an expression of belief that was in opposition to his own and a preamble must have approximated to the testator's own inclinations. Most wills were written down by a scribe and before the Reformation this task often fell on the local clergy. In the period 1500-1539, twenty-two of the twenty-seven wills of Eye which give details of executors or witnesses include the name of a local cleric. (The fifteenth-century Eye priest, Thomas Harvey, acted as executor for two-thirds of the testators in his day.) This proportion fell dramatically in the forties: only two of thirteen wills during the latter part of Henry's reign involved clerics in the semi-official capacity of executor or witness. Four out of nine included them during Edward's reign and four out of twenty-one in Mary's. After this, the number declines considerably and for the rest of the century only in nine wills out of a possible fifty-five did the clergy play any part. (This may reflect not only the decline in the numbers of ecclesiastics in Eye following the Henrician and Edwardian dissolutions, but also the decline in the status of the clergy in this time of increasing secularisation. The church was loosening its monolithic hold on people's minds and lives and the secular authorities were in many cases replacing it.)

Later scribes were not necessarily part of the clerical hierarchy and between 1552 and the end of Mary's reign, the name of Thomas Rippes occurs on no fewer than sixteen of the twenty-three wills. Sometimes he is specifically designated as scribe and on other occasions merely as one of the witnesses. During the first year of Elizabeth he again appears on five out of seven wills. His name finally occurs in a will of 1561 and his own death occurred later that year in December.

Of the twenty-two wills he was involved with, all but two began with the traditional Catholic formula, and those two exceptions were the ardent Protestants James Seman and John Cossye. This would certainly suggest that, in the absence of deeply-felt religious

convictions, or in the face of confusion or indifference, the scribe had considerable influence on the opening formula. Thomas Rippes' conservatism in spiritual matters is further confirmed by the fact that he was the close associate of certain local Catholics. The vicar, for example, left him forty shillings in his will and smaller amounts to his wife and two sons. William Woodman Webbe bequeathed his best gown plus forty shillings and to Thomas's son William (the testator's godson) he left twenty shillings 'to helpe to fynde hym to schole'.

The general impression given by the wills of Eye parishioners for the whole of the Reformation period indicates a readiness to accept the status quo and only a few individuals protested their faith against the prevailing religious climate (two Catholics in Edward's reign and two Protestants in Mary's reign). Indeed, the wills under Mary show an overwhelming inclination towards traditional beliefs. Of course, those making their wills during the fifties would have grown up under Catholicism and the Marian religious reversal would, to them, have represented a return to the familiar. Or perhaps they were simply realistic people with an inbuilt respect for the law who understood well enough the implications of making a stand against whichever regime happened to be in power.

A good example of this is William Woodman Webbe who has just been referred to. He drew up his will on 19th November 1558 - two days after the death of Mary. He was a friend of the Goldings and conservative by inclination. In his will he left money to be given annually to the poor (in the form of bread, cheese and beer) on those days when prayers were said in remembrance of the town's benefactors (clear evidence that the ancient Eye custom of processing round the town and praying for the souls of the benefactors had been reinstated). He also left 26s 8d to be paid annually towards the wages of two parish clerks. But although he was a traditionalist by nature,

William Woodman Webbe was acutely aware of the mutability of religious policy and, with diplomatic respect for the law, added a cautious rider to his bequests that they be carried out 'as the lawes of the realme doe permytt'. (A few years later, his widow, Katherine Webbe, spoke in distinctly Calvinistic terms in her will: it would appear that the Semans were not the only family to be split down the centre doctrinally.)

However, if the majority of people in Eye accepted the status quo, it did not necessarily mean they approved of everything, and during the last year of her reign, the Catholic Queen did not endear herself to her people over the loss of Calais which had been in English hands for more than two hundred years. The Spanish ambassador wrote that since the fall of Calais

not a third of the people who usually go to church are now attending. (26)

It was not an auspicious omen for the last few months of that ill-fated reign and, for those who looked elsewhere for signs, the cosmos offered little reassurance either for the year was marked by a season of excessive flooding and storms and by fevers which brought with them a high mortality. Sir Thomas Smith was among those who interpreted the signs as divine wrath.

God did so punish the realm with quartan agues and with other long and new sicknesses, that in the last two years of the reign of Queen Mary, so many of her subjects was made away, what with the executions of sword and fire, what by sicknesses, that the third part of the men of England were consumed. (27)

His statistics may not bear too close an analysis, but it is not difficult to see how such conclusions were reached. Even in a less superstitious age we might feel some discomfiture at the deaths of so many leading ecclesiastics, like William Peto, a possible replacement for Cardinal Pole, or William Peryn, the Dominican devotional writer, and, within one year, no less than thirteen diocesan bishops

including John Hopton, Bishop of Norwich.⁽²⁸⁾ Neither did Eye escape the ravages. 1557 was a year of very high mortality (29 deaths as against the average annual rate of 13). August, October and November were especially bad months and among those to suffer personal losses at this time were two of the town's leading Protestants: Robert Thrower, the son of William, died and Robert London lost his wife Christyne. The nature of the fever is not known but, unlike other epidemics, this one does not seem to have afflicted entire families: rather it is the deaths of individuals which are recorded in the parish register.

Finally, on 17th November 1558, the Queen herself died, to be followed within only a few hours by Cardinal Pole.⁽²⁹⁾ The tide had turned once more and the country found itself with another Protestant monarch on the throne. It had been a depressing year and, whatever the feelings of individual citizens at the new turn of events, Eye enjoyed the excuse for a rare celebration, and the dark November days were momentarily brightened by revelries in the Church - bread and a firkin of beer - as the new Queen was proclaimed to all.⁽³⁰⁾

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Chapter 8'THIS MOST HAPPIE DAYE'⁽¹⁾The Elizabethan Settlement

Elizabeth was crowned Queen of England on 15th January 1559 and, after the turmoils of the past decade, there can have been few in the country who would have imagined that this reign was to continue into the next century. Those not yet completely disillusioned by the recurring upheavals must have wondered just what fresh chaos the new reign would bring and there was much speculation about the disposition of the new monarch. How far would her Protestantism extend? Would she adopt her sister's cruel methods of persuasion? How could she even begin to heal the damaging ruptures now evident in the social and religious life of her people?

Caution - that quality she was to make so peculiarly her own - marked the opening weeks of her reign and a royal proclamation in December forbade the use of

any other manner of public prayer, rite, or ceremony in the church but that which is already by law received.

Preaching was, for the moment, silenced and the months of January and February brought about no changes in parochial life.⁽²⁾

Elizabeth was meeting nothing head-on and she was careful to preserve the status quo. Even so, she gave discreet hints as to her humour. On Christmas Day she had walked out of the chapel when Bishop Oglethorpe persisted in elevating the host at mass, and during the state opening of Parliament on 25th January she ordered the ceremonial tapers of the monks of Westminster to be extinguished with a characteristic 'Away with those torches, we can see well enough!' She kept open the question of the royal supremacy until it could be verified by Parliament by adding a judicious 'et cetera' after her

royal titles. But, of course, the Catholic community were not entirely insensitive to the way the future was pointing and the Spanish ambassador wrote to Philip of Spain towards the end of January saying that

the Catholics are very fearful of the measures to be taken in this Parliament. (3)

One Catholic who shared that anxiety was Richard Thurkettle who was watching national events closely. He made particular note in his book concerning the unsuccessful conference held in Westminster Abbey at the end of March between leading Catholic and Protestant divines. Elizabeth had selected most of the Protestant theologians from among those in exile during the previous reign, and the vicar of Eye made a note of the questions 'that were proponed to be disputed betwixt the catholiques and the genevans' adding

The deffendors of thes questions were Doctors Coxe, Gryndall, Horne, Wythtedde, Lever, Sampson, Juell etc.

He might also have added Scory, Sandys, Aylmer and Guest. Most of these theologians would form the Elizabethan bench of bishops.⁽⁴⁾ Richard Thurkettle carefully wrote out in Latin the propositions that were to be considered:

It is contrary to the word of God and the ancient custom of the church that a language unknown to the people be used in public worship and the administration of the sacraments.

Anyone with the authority of the church can set up the ceremonies and rites of the church.

It cannot be proved from the word of God that sacrifice be offered in the mass for life and death.

These were his own simplified and slightly shortened versions of the actual propositions, but it does serve to show just how closely he was in touch with events in London and how eagerly he watched what was happening.⁽⁵⁾

Meanwhile, the first effects of the new Parliament were beginning to filter through to parochial level and by the end of March communion was allowed in both kinds. After the Easter break, Parliament

concentrated on the two vital issues of Supremacy and Uniformity. The new Supremacy Bill (with the Queen's title of Supreme Governor rather than Supreme Head) repealed the Marian statutes which had reinstated both the jurisdiction of Rome and the heresy laws. It revived the ten statutes of Henry VIII and authorised the Queen to visit and correct the church through her ecclesiastical commissions. It also imposed an oath of supremacy upon all ecclesiastics and officers of state; refusal to take this oath would result in the loss of benefice or office.

Parliament then turned its attention to the Act of Uniformity. The new prayer book was ordered to be the only form of service; it was based largely on the 1552 book with a few additions from the 1549 version and it allowed a characteristically latitudinous Elizabethan belief. Clerics who tried to use any other form of service were liable to deprivation of all their benefices and a term of imprisonment. Parishioners who were absent from church would forfeit the sum of one shilling per Sunday to be levied by the churchwardens and to be used to help the poor. On the ground, this all meant that services were once more to be conducted in English, communion to be taken in both kinds, mass abolished and all images removed and either broken or burned.⁽⁶⁾

Richard Thurkettle's brief comment to cover these momentous affairs simply records 'we receyvdy another comunyon book' and that this

third booke came forth at Mydsomer and than sett forthe
in all chirches 1559, the first yere of quene Elizabeth.⁽⁷⁾

(There is a curious parallel in the cautious, diplomatic style of the vicar of Eye with that of his new Queen, for he too hid behind the guise of vagueness, using the convenient 'et cetera' whenever it suited him. In a note he made at this time, for example, concerning a lease for the school lands, he referred to the new monarch as 'Quene Elyzabeth by the grace of god quene of England, france etc.'

Like her, he not infrequently employed the device of ambiguity.)⁽⁸⁾

All altars were once again to be removed and this was to be carried out 'by oversight of curate and churchwardens, or one of them'⁽⁹⁾ - an activity that no doubt gave much satisfaction to the churchwardens of the new reign who were no less than Thomas London and William Thrower. When this was done at Eye it is impossible to say, although the old stone slab of the high altar was certainly protected from the axes of those 'hot-burning-in-zeal officers',⁽¹⁰⁾ who defaced so much of the church fabric for it was preserved and still exists today in the pavement of the north chapel of St Peter's. Many parishes did not comply with this order to remove their altars and in the visitation articles of Archbishop Parker ten years later enquiry was to be made in each church as to whether or not the altar had in fact been removed.⁽¹¹⁾ Not that the removal of a stone altar and its replacement with a table necessarily made a great deal of difference in some places, for it was reported in several Norfolk parishes that some tables were still 'decked like an altar'.⁽¹²⁾

Nevertheless, the new orders were carried out in many parishes and as early as August 1559 the Spanish ambassador noted that the altars, crosses and images had been removed from many London churches. Shortly afterwards, the contemporary diarist Machyn recorded that crosses, images, censers, altar cloths, books and banners were burned 'with great wonder'.⁽¹³⁾

The parishes of Bungay and Cratfield also complied promptly with the new injunctions. Cratfield paid 8d for 'pullinge down the aulter' in 1559 and 4s 2d for a new communion table. In the same year, Bungay's accounts reflect the by now monotonous ups and downs of the religious switchback. The total cost of the changes for that first year of Queen Elizabeth amounted to 16s 11d, which was all the more ironic since it was only the year before that they had got round to

putting up the images again. (The expenses involved then came to over 52s.)(14)

	s	d
to Molle for letting down the images		12
for meat and drink for him		5
to John Felld for helping Molle, for wages, meat and drink		9
to Cotes and But for breaking the images		4
to Felld and Towtlaye for breaking down the altar and carrying away the same		8
to John Felld for a day's work in breaking down the altars, with meat		9
to Edward Felld for a book of service	6	-
to Mistress Wharton for a psaltar	2	-
to Edward Felld for a book of the injunctions		6
for a book of the homilies	2	2
for two boards for the communion table		12
to Edward Molle for a pair of trestles and for making the table		16

Whatever the economic burdens imposed by the Reformation on parishes, for some individuals the effect was not necessarily disadvantageous. A whole battery of labourers and craftsmen were needed to implement the spiritual inclinations of successive monarchs. With images and altars and candles and windows and vestments and service books being taken away and then replaced, only to be taken away again, it must have seemed like a world gone mad. But somebody had to do the taking away and somebody had to do the putting back and these tasks fell naturally onto the local carpenters, stonemasons and other craftsmen. For them, the Reformation was business.

If we take just one of the recurring names in the Bungay accounts, Edward Molle, a carpenter, it is clear that the mercurial church provided a regular source of income for him and his assistants. His name occurs many times in the accounts for ordinary carpentry work - making a lectern, mending the church gate, the church chest or the bell wheels - as well as for work more directly related to the theological changes. In 1551, for example, he was paid 7s to make a communion table to replace the Catholic altar, but three years later, under Mary, he was making a new frame for the canopy and a new 'harrowe' for the Easter candles. In 1558, he and his assistant spent a whole day in erecting the images of St Mary and St John

on the rood loft, for which they received 19d altogether. Within the year, they were paid 26d for removing them. John Felld was also paid 22d for helping to take down the images and for breaking up the altar and carting it away.

The confusion of the ordinary parishioners at this time can hardly be imagined. For the third time in little over a decade they were facing yet another 'change in religion' with its consequent effects on the interior of their churches, the liturgy and the sort of things they were supposed to believe. Perhaps in their bewilderment they too felt like some of those saints in the church windows whom the iconoclasts

turned up their heels into the place where their heads used to be fixed. (15)

In the absence of church accounts, it is difficult to calculate how much destruction or state-sanctioned vandalism went on at Eye, but when William Dowsing, the parliamentary visitor for the eastern counties, inspected Eye in the following century he noted that many windows 'had been broken down afore', although seven 'superstitious' pictures (including one of Mary Magdalene) remained in the chancel. (16)

It must have been very hard for Richard Thurkettle to stomach all these changes and he would have shared the regret of the Spanish ambassador who reported that

Heresy is recovering furiously all the credit it has lost for years past. (17)

Yet he was forced to make the harsh decision as to just how far he could conform to this current series of theological innovations. Practical common sense ensured that the vast majority of the 9,000 parish priests of England stayed where they were, and they indicated their agreement to the Elizabethan settlement by signing the oath of supremacy. Many, of course, would welcome it, but those who did not had to be content to compromise. The deterrents of the Act of

Uniformity ensured acquiescence by most of those clerics - unknown in number - who would share something of the dilemma facing the vicar of Eye and only an insignificant number of them held out for principle over livelihood: between 1558-1564 only seven Suffolk incumbents were deprived of their livings and it cannot be said with any certainty that even all of these were ejected for non-compliance.⁽¹⁸⁾ Richard Thurkettle would have been by no means alone as a conservative priest who continued in his benefice (Robert Parkyn did the same)⁽¹⁹⁾ but for this austere and devout man the decision cannot have been easy. There is no hint in his personality of the pragmatism of Vicar Aleyn of Bray who also retained his living through the reigns of Henry VIII and his three children. On being accused as a turncoat, Vicar Aleyn's reply was that he had always maintained his one principle 'which is this, to live and die the vicar of Bray'.⁽²⁰⁾ An even more baldly practical statement came from a Berkshire priest who, as late as 1583, is reputed to have said that 'if ever we had mass again he would say it, for he must live'.⁽²¹⁾

Richard Thurkettle was not of this expedient cast of mind and, although he continued in his benefice for the remaining two years of his life, he managed to get away with not appending his signature to the Elizabethan settlement. In September 1559, five hundred of his fellow clergymen in the Diocese of Norwich signed the oath of supremacy but Richard Thurkettle was not among them. His conscience, it seems, could not compromise that far.⁽²²⁾

It was common knowledge that the oath of supremacy was being evaded in some areas - due in part to the laxity of sheriffs and other officials who were responsible for administering it. Perhaps on this occasion his poor health supplied the vicar of Eye with a satisfactory alibi, but whatever the real reason, he both avoided the oath of supremacy and retained his living.

The other Catholics in Eye also settled for an outward acceptance of the Elizabethan service and a list of recusants made as early as 1559 for Suffolk does not include anyone from Eye.⁽²³⁾ They were conducting themselves in a cautious manner although, as Christopher Haigh points out, refusal to attend services was not necessarily a natural reaction to events in 1559.⁽²⁴⁾ The parish church was not only the focus of religious life, it was central to the whole life of the community and withdrawal from it entailed isolation from that community. One curate describes how the congregation after evening prayers on Sundays and holy days

stay in the church conferring or talking one with another by the space of an hour at the least, except that it be in the cold of winter. (25)

Removing oneself deliberately from that society would entail a decision that carried enormous social consequences and it was not one to be undertaken lightly. In any case, withdrawal from their parish church was the last thing some Catholics would have wanted. Many people may have been relatively indifferent to it as a religious institution, but those likely to take a recusant stand were certainly not for to them the church was the focal point of their faith and worship. The Goldings, for example, had worked for St Peter's of Eye literally for generations, giving of their time in its various offices and of their money in sustaining and improving its fabric. It would have been almost inconceivable to cut themselves off from so significant a part of their heritage. How could anyone who loved it as much as the Goldings withdraw themselves from everything it stood for, however strongly they objected to the new theology? Monarchs might come and go, services be altered, doctrines prove transient, the internal fabric change and change again, but still the edifice itself remained, with its vast tower dominating the town, radiating permanence, solid assurance, a continuing memorial to the glories of the past. To leave the church would have been a sort of betrayal.

The best they could hope for would be that their clergyman would continue to provide something approaching traditional Catholicism and that, even though the mass was excluded, the Anglican service could be adapted to suit Catholic tastes.

This certainly happened in some parishes. In the north, which was on the whole much more conservative than other parts of the country, the new Anglican services were not being properly performed in Liverpool in 1564 and as late as 1573 in Prescott. Many of the old customs still survived, including the use of holy water, wafers rather than bread in communion, the tolling of bells for the dead and the observance of saints' days. And not even the state could control the private prayers of individuals, although some people were bolder than others: in some Lancashire churches later in Elizabeth's reign, parishioners were still saying prayers

with crossing and knocking of their breast and sometimes with beads closely handled. (26)

Those who did not appreciate the Elizabethan service stuffed their ears with wool while concentrating on their rosaries, and the use of 'beads' was one of the most common of conservative survivals. (A search was made throughout East Anglia in 1561 for those still using the rosary.)(27)

As late as the 1570s, complaints were made against Sir Thomas Cornwallis (who had compromised his Catholic beliefs and was now attending the church at Brome) that

all service tyme when others on their knees are at praiers, he will sett contemptuously reading on a boke (most likely some Lady psalter or portasse which have been found in his pue). (28)

Attendance at the Anglican service neither implied approval of it nor participation in it and many conservatives coped with the conflict by behaving in this ambivalent way.

Perhaps Edward Golding did the same. He must certainly have felt in the early years of Elizabeth's reign that it was more

constructive to remain within the church - to influence events and fend off some of the more radical changes - and it may have been in this frame of mind that he became churchwarden during the latter part of the sixties. In any case, religious conflict was rather more blurred at the edges for the first decade of the Elizabethan settlement and did not yet partake of the intensity and divisiveness that were to be so apparent in the seventies and eighties.

Meanwhile, life went on much as usual and the Goldings found themselves preoccupied with events nearer at home, for in April 1559 they celebrated the wedding of Agnes, Edward's younger sister, who married Henry Whylsher, a Norfolk man living at the time near Occold.⁽²⁹⁾ Her marriage took place almost exactly two years after the death of their mother and it was perhaps with some relief that the four Golding brothers assigned responsibility of Agnes to her new husband. The celebrations certainly provided a welcome relief from the wider preoccupations of recent months. The wedding did not take place at Eye but at Oakley, just north of Brome, and the Cornwallis family opened their home, Brome Hall, for the wedding feast. (Edward was at this time acting as Receiver for the Cornwallis estates.)

Among those present were friends and relations who shared the Goldings' religious views: people like the Herrings of Eye, the Aldhams of Brome (Edward's in-laws) and one of the Vaux family, who were to be among the leading recusants of Suffolk. Richard Thurkettle said that many people attended the wedding, but among those specifically named by him as witnesses were Edward Bole, John Broole, Thomas Mallowes and Anne Seman. Thomas Mallowes, who at the time was bailiff of Eye, was a close family friend of the Goldings. He had also been one of the witnesses to Christian Golding's will, as well as to the will of her brother, Lewes Harvey. Richard Thurkettle was to leave his son William £2 towards the boy's studies at Cambridge (perhaps William was the 'Mr. Mallowes' referred to early

in the next century who gave £200 to Eye School). Another of the witnesses at the wedding was Anne Seman who was godmother to one of the Golding children. Her close association with the family would seem to be in spite of their religious outlook, for she was the widow of James, the ardent Protestant whose views she shared. Evidently not all friendships were soured by religious differences.

It is, of course, difficult to judge the impact of a family like the Goldings on a small community, but the evidence suggests they made both forceful enemies and devoted friends. Edward had matriculated from Gonville Hall at Easter 1548 and his brothers Robert and William had studied at the same Cambridge college. (There is no evidence of where the fourth brother Thomas was educated.) William went on to Trinity Hall while Robert was admitted to the Inner Temple.⁽³⁰⁾ Robert did not return to Eye but settled in Bury. Edward did come back and he eventually married Mirable Aldham from Brome. Mirable proved very popular in Eye and her influence can be detected from the sudden spate of baby Mirables in the parish register. William Herring set the trend by naming his third daughter after her, and this was followed by a number of Mirables in the years that followed, including one of the daughters of John Hewar, vicar of the town in the 1560s. In fact, Mirable Golding set a fashion that was to last for twenty years.

From his scribbled additions to Richard Thurkettle's book, it appears that her husband had several enemies, although local wills also show that he had some loyal and trusting friends. Margerie Folcarde referred to him as her 'loving friend' and the widow, Catheren Smyeth, appointed him supervisor of her will and asked him to take especial care of her three daughters, Anne, Frances and Margaret.

I nominat & hartely desyre ... for godsake Edward Gowlding to be supervisor of this my laste wyll & testament, & do praye him to be good to my sayd dawghtters in adfising them with his good advice from tyme to tyme And I charge every of my sayd dawghters upon my blessinge to obeye & folow his counsell.

If any difficulties arose as a result of her will, then

the contrevsry or dowte shalbe resolved & ended by his only order & advice.

The Goldings continued to play their full part in the local community, apparently undaunted by the upheavals of the past thirty years.

Never a family to sit back and take a lesser role, they operated in the very centre of conflict and controversy and for that reason they were either loved or hated. Indifference was not a response they engendered. Agnes's marriage to Henry Whylsher gave them a rare opportunity for celebration and they gathered their friends about them to share the festivities. Richard Thurkettle certainly approved of the match and he remembered Agnes's new husband in his will the following year.

The vicar's note about the wedding is followed by a curious paragraph in his book which was subsequently deleted, although it is still clearly readable. It refers to 'Master Goldyng', a fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, who

tooke his Journeye to goo beyonde the Seas with Master Archdeacon Carey And his servaunt thei went from London to take shyppyng as they seyde in the Yle off Whyte the x day of July whiche was than on the mundaye 1559. (31)

Archdeacon Carey was Archdeacon of Norfolk (he held the post from 1552-1587).⁽³²⁾ The vicar says nothing more about this trip, but the fact that it was deleted from his book and perhaps the slight doubt expressed that the two men were taking a ship 'as they seyde' in the Isle of Wight does give it an air of mystery. The 'Master Goldyng' referred to was probably Edward's older brother William who had become a fellow of Trinity Hall in 1557. Someone of the same name had become a priest during Mary's reign, but it is impossible to tell

if it was the same person as William Golding of Eye. If Edward's brother was a Marian priest, then the trip to the continent raises all sorts of speculation as, of course, many young Catholics would later travel to Europe to continue their education in the Catholic seminaries. If a similar purpose was in the minds of the Goldings, then they had acted very promptly for Elizabeth had only been on the throne for a few months. William probably never returned to England for he was dead within the year.

Less ambiguous, however, is the vicar's next sentence in his book (also deleted) about the imprisonment of Sir Thomas Cornwallis. Sir Thomas had spent a period in the Fleet Prison, probably under suspicion for his religion as was to happen again later in his life, and Richard Thurkettle wrote of that same day, 10th July:

That day was Sir Thomas Cornwalleis in the fleett and
was shortly delyvryd thankes be to goud.

That rare expression of emotion leaves us in no doubts as to Richard Thurkettle's feelings on the matter, but for the most part he acted cautiously about the latest set of religious changes, uncertain as to the direction events might go.

Elizabeth appeared to be very lenient; she had said she desired to make no windows into men's souls. But the Catholic community was wary - as well they might be, remembering the persecutions of the previous reign - and when Richard Thurkettle made his will on 20th August 1560 his statement of faith was at one and the same time uncompromising and yet inconclusive. This devout man commended his soul to the mercy of Almighty God

under the lawes of whose moste holye churche I proteste
my selfe to dye, an humble penitent christiane man for
my offences.

Such calculated ambiguity sheltered many a crypto-Catholic during that first decade of Elizabeth's reign. And the Queen was probably content that it should. She and her council were concerned about

the nation's stability and they felt that time was on their side: the old religion would die out naturally with its old adherents. At all costs the Queen wished to avoid the cruel methods of her sister Mary.

This is certainly what happened to one of the old religion's most faithful adherents, for the vicar of Eye died very early in the new reign. The long gap in the parish register - about which he was usually so conscientious - suggests he had probably been ill for some time. (There are no entries for two and a half years, from 19th June 1558 until 5th January 1561.)⁽³³⁾ And 1560 marks the last entry he ever made in his book. Perhaps even the constant vicar of Eye was becoming dispirited after the traumatic events that dogged most of his professional life. The stresses of seemingly endless upheavals and the deep heart-searching each one must have wrought in this conscientious, introverted man would have taken their toll, and he refers in his will to the 'tyme of my syckenes' as though this were no short-lived affair. The tenor of his will reveals a loyal, gentle man, appreciative of friendship. To Lady Tirrell of Eye he left 'two angells of gowlde' in recognition of her goodness towards him during his illness, and he left another gold angel to⁽³⁴⁾

my awlde frende Mr Symonds the Comissarye, as a
remembrance of my good wyll towards him.

He also remembered a Norwich couple, John Felowe and his wife for
there owld frendeshippe towards me.

He asked William Herring to be supervisor of his will and left him
forty shillings

for his gentill frendeshippe allwayes shewed towards me.

To his godchildren, Thomas Thurkettle, Thomas Syre, Ellen Cutting and others not named, he bequeathed amounts varying between 12d and 6s 8d, and to Thomas Rippes, the conservative scribe, he gave forty shillings, also remembering his wife Alice and their sons William and Thomas.

He did not forget his lifelong interest in education, leaving £2 each

to William Malloves and Thomas Smith towards their maintenance while they were studying at Cambridge. To Robert Fuller, the sexton, he gave 3s 4d, having forgiven him for his part in the sales from the old guildhall ten years before.

He remembered his 'thre awlde servants', Isabell Fuller, Agnes Rowlande and Margaret, giving them 3s 4d each, and he provided magnificently for his present servant, Agnes Thurkettle, by leaving her his house in Church Street and the garden and outyard on condition she did not 'imbesyll & diminishe or conveye away' any part of the contents or any money that happened to be in the house at the time of his death. In addition, she was to receive

xl^s of lawfull Englishe money together with my worste fether bedd my beste materes ii owlde bowlsters ii payer of my worste blankets iii payer of quorste sheets ii pewter platters ii pewter sawsers one pewter saulte saller ii wasshing baroles next to the Beste my brewing tubbe ii lytell tobbes used to tunne in one lytell cawdrone with ii standing eares ii kettells one quarte pann of brasse with asteele and my beste brasse pottle saving one my greateste cofer standing in my parlor with one lytell cyprese cofer.

There were a number of Thurkettles in Eye, not necessarily related to the vicar, and to another member of the same family, a widow also called Agnes, he left twenty shillings, to her two daughters still living at home with her five shillings each, and to her son Robert ten shillings, as well as a mattress, a pair of sheets and a pair of blankets.

Richard Thurkettle had always shown concern for the poor and they too were not forgotten in his will. £10 was to be distributed among them at the time of his burial.

The Goldings figure prominently in the bequests and Edward was given £20, while his wife Mirable had some pieces of silver. Robert was also given £20 plus a feather bed, a bolster, a pillow and a coverlet which the vicar had originally bought from their older brother William who had recently died. He also left Robert a pair

of blankets, a pair of sheets and half of his apparell. To the remaining brother, Thomas, he left £10 and the rest of his household articles:

as bedding lynnen wollen Brasse pewter plate
coberds chestes bedstedes apparell and generally
all other my implements & utensells of howse howlde
of what kynd, nature, qualite, or conditione soever
the same be.

His final bequest was to Agnes's husband, Henry Whylsher, who was given £10. Edward and Thomas were asked to act as executors.

It is clear from his will that Richard Thurkettle was no impoverished cleric. The monetary legacies alone amount to over £85 and, in addition to five angels (an old English coin worth between 6s 8d and 10s) he left a house and considerable contents. He was obviously not solely dependent for his income on his stipend from Eye and there is evidence that earlier in his career at least he was a pluralist.⁽³⁵⁾ What, if any, his other sources of income were it is impossible to tell.

There is no record of the date of his death, but his successor John Page was ordained vicar of Eye on 21st April 1561 on the 'natural death' of the previous incumbent.⁽³⁶⁾

Richard Thurkettle had been vicar of the parish for over thirty years and his life's work - covering as it did the reigns of four Tudor monarchs - coincided virtually with the entire Reformation process. He had been born into the old world of mediaeval England, the time of one faith, of unchangeability, of a society dominated by the monolithic structure of the church, and he ended his days in another world, the new world of split theology, of compromise Anglicanism, of petty secular officialdom, modern politics and spiritual uncertainty.

He died a sad and disillusioned man as he saw his country once more heading off in a direction which he felt deeply to be in fundamental error, an England which followed a perversion of the

truth and was, in the words of one Jesuit missionary, in the last era 'of a declining and gasping world'.⁽³⁷⁾

The new vicar, John Page, came from Cratfield. He had been deprived of his living during Mary's reign - probably for marriage - which suggests that his theological outlook was radically different from that of his predecessor.⁽³⁸⁾ On 15th July 1561 it was noted in the parish register that 'Mr. John Page, vicar of Eye, did ring his bells', but by September of the following year he too was dead. He was succeeded by John Hewar in February 1563 who was to remain vicar for the next thirteen years.⁽³⁹⁾

While the Suffolk Protestants welcomed the accession of Elizabeth, they soon discovered that she had a mind of her own on matters of ecclesiastical protocol. In her progress through the county in 1561 she was scandalized by what she saw as the impudent behaviour of many of the ministers and readers at Ipswich for there was little order in the public service, few of them wore the surplice and all of them had a retinue of wives and children. She issued an order from Ipswich to the Archbishop of Canterbury and all church dignitaries forbidding women to resort to collegiate churches or cathedral lodgings. And she left Ipswich, which had been generous in its entertainment costs for her, in some dismay to continue her Suffolk progress to Shelley Hall, to the Waldegraves at Smallbridge and to the Tollemaches at Helmingham.⁽⁴⁰⁾

A new Bishop had been appointed to the Diocese of Norwich in the previous year. John Parkhurst had been in exile in Zurich during the reign of Mary and his inclinations were as much towards Puritanism as his predecessor's had been towards Catholicism.⁽⁴¹⁾ One of the first priorities of the new reign was the attempt to improve the general level of clerical scholarship and by 1561 clergy were instructed to learn by heart certain portions of the New Testament which were to be repeated before their synods. In the Diocese of Norwich, clergy were

to study two chapters of the New Testament each day until they had completed the epistles and then they would appear before the new Bishop for a detailed examination. They also had to consider the 'just taking away of the Pope's usurped power' as the only subject for a quarterly discourse.⁽⁴²⁾ Sermons, however, were not always received with approbation by the congregation, and one north country man expressed his feelings somewhat bluntly when he declared that

the preaching of the Gospel is but bibble-bubble, and I care not a fart of my tail for any black coat in Wensleydale, and I had rather hear a cuckoo sing. ⁽⁴³⁾

At some churches, in the absence of sermons, regular readings from the royal injunctions and the books of homilies played an important part in trying to break down conservative temperament. Cratfield had paid 8d for 'the Bousshopes injoncyons' in 1561 and four shillings for a 'book of omelyes and prayers' in 1563. At Bungay, the cost of a book of injunctions was 6d and a book of homilies 2s 2d.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Those first few years of Elizabeth's reign were an uncertain time. The changes had been rapid of late - four monarchs in a dozen or so years - and there would be no reason to expect any break in that pattern now. That the Elizabethan settlement did endure is certainly not something contemporaries could have foreseen and speculation - especially in conservative areas - was as rife as ever. In 1562, the Bishop of Carlisle was reported to have said that 'every day men look for a change' and another gentleman was confident that

the crucifix with Mary and John should be set up again in all churches

before Christmas was out.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Nowhere was the bewilderment more obvious than in the conduct of worship. In 1564 Secretary Cecil assessed the great variety of practice: divine service was sometimes performed in the chancel and sometimes in the body of the church; some clergymen sat in the church and others stayed in the pulpit facing the people; some kept precisely to the order of the books, while others included metric psalms; some

wore a surplice, others did not. In some parishes, the table stood in the body of the church, in others it was placed in the chancel; tables were either joined or standing on tressels; some had a carpet, others did not. On the administering of communion, Cecil reported that chalices, communion cups or even common cups were used; both leavened and unleavened bread was given, and parishioners received the communion kneeling, standing or sitting. With baptisms it was much the same; some clergymen used the font, others a basin; some made the sign of the cross, others did not. And while some clerics wore square caps, others wore hats, while still others wore scholars' clothes.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Such diversity did, of course, offer clergymen considerable freedom to conduct worship in the way that suited them best. Had Richard Thurkettle lived, he would almost certainly have taken advantage of the laxity and adapted the new Elizabethan service to a method most nearly resembling his own faith. But after his death in 1561 a silence falls on the parish life of Eye for some years. John Page barely had time to establish himself as vicar and throughout the sixties there are no intimations as to the character or beliefs of the next incumbent, John Hewar.

The parochial silence, however, may not be insignificant for the town was preoccupied on another front. Perhaps it was the years of festering resentment between church and borough, conservative and radical, Catholic and Protestant, which finally erupted into open enmity for the community of Eye does seem to have been one of particularly deep divisions. Whatever the direct or indirect cause, something exploded in the early sixties into a 'Great Disorder'.

There is no historical evidence to illuminate this particular episode, but it was in an effort to smooth over these 'said Variance & Controversies' that the new borough constitution was drawn up in 1566 from which we may perhaps infer the nature of the troubles.

The old constitution had been in operation for about twenty years - twenty very difficult and changeable years. The new one covered most areas of town life in meticulous detail: the election, function and conduct of officers; the courts; freemen; apprentices; fairs; brewers and victuallers; municipal tenants; taxes; punishment of offenders; the poor; the market; the common land; the town lands; the clerks; the sexton; the churchwardens; church ornaments; tithes; and finally the school and schoolmaster.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Reading between the lines, a considerable power struggle between certain local factions can be detected and it would appear that the conflicts were not entirely of a secular nature. That eminent Catholic, the Duke of Norfolk, had directly intervened and had assisted in drawing up the new constitution 'for the Wealth & Preservation of good order & quiet' in the town and the constitution stipulates that, in gratitude, public prayers should be said for the Duke's 'good estate' during divine service. During these early years of Elizabeth, those of a conservative disposition in Eye had clearly by no means given up the struggle.

In the see-saw between Catholic and Protestant it had been easy to categorise all attitudes along the doctrinal continuum - and this was probably how those involved tended to view the issues. But Elizabeth had been on the throne now for eight years, longer than either her brother or her sister, and the country was beginning to stabilise. The continuing battle in this one small Suffolk parish during the early and mid-sixties can perhaps best be described as the old one re-formed on Elizabethan lines - not so much Catholic versus Protestant as church party versus borough party. In many ways it was the same old conflict but it could now no longer be submerged with or even hide behind the convenience of theological differences. Where once - long before all the disruptions to religious and community life - the church had been the centre of almost everything at local level, with the Tudors that

power had passed gradually into the secular hands of lay officials. This process had continued alongside the theological Reformation and it is by no means easy to disentangle the threads of one from the other - nor should it be, for many of the protagonists themselves would have been unable to distinguish the elements of these concurrent processes.

On the face of it, the 1566 constitution represents to some extent a compromise in Eye between the authority of the church and the borough. The churchwardens, for example, were given considerable responsibility in many areas of town life. However, in reality it can be argued that this office was by now becoming less and less related to religious worship and was increasingly 'burdened with a hotchpot of miscellaneous duties'.⁽⁴⁸⁾ It should not therefore be seen as somehow representing the church in town affairs. Indeed, that it was simply another rank in Tudor lay officialdom is confirmed in Eye by the fact that the selection of churchwardens after 1566 was to be the sole responsibility of borough councillors.

One thing is clear: the role of the vicar was stripped of everything but its spiritual function. Not only did he have no voice in the election of his own churchwardens, but he lost all control over the school and choice of schoolmaster.⁽⁴⁹⁾

In fact, several matters concerning church affairs were clarified under the new constitution. It was decided that in future the yearly stipend of the clerk and the sexton should be assessed upon every householder in the town and that anyone breaking the order or refusing to pay would be fined 3s 4d (which would go into the 'poor Mans Box'). The church itself was to be used as a store for many town records and documents and an elaborate system of locks and keys was put into operation. All 'Deeds & Charters Copys & all other Evidence and Writing' concerning the town lands (with the exception of leases)

were to be kept in

the Chamber over the Vestry adjoining to the Chancell of Eye in a Chest or Coffe there provided under three locks.

Two of the keys were in the custody of two members of the Twelve and the third key was to be kept by one of the Twenty-Four. Strict instructions about the removal of documents were issued: nothing was to be taken out of the chest except in the presence of at least four members of the Twelve and two of the Twenty-Four. Whenever anything was removed a 'remembrance' was to be placed in the chest recording which papers had been borrowed and by whom.

One such 'remembrance' has actually survived and, coincidentally, it is written in the unmistakeable scrawly hand of Edward Golding. It notes that he removed certain papers on 24th February 1567:

Taken owt of this cofer & given to Ed. Goldyng the 24 of Februarie 1566 (i.e. 1567) ii papers thone a copie of a precept from the shrief tarrest diverse men in Eye thother a copie of a Sup(er)sed (i.e. a supersedeas) for the same persons. (50)

It was in this same chest in the room over the vestry that the churchwardens' accounts were also to be preserved, along with the book of constitutions. Unfortunately, most of the contents of this chest, including the churchwardens' accounts, have since disappeared. (One copy of the constitutions has survived which may have been that retained by the bailiffs for their own personal use.)

The amount paid to the vicar by the town as tithe for the common pasture (generally known as 'the moor') was increased in the new constitution from 2s 8d to 5s. (This was a more realistic sum in view of the inflation of the sixteenth century: the tithe - when it was paid - had been 2s 8d for well over thirty years.) However, the vicar did not receive the increase without a condition, and this was that, in recognition of the town's gratitude, he would

always hereafter at the time of divine Service Openly pronounce & read such usual prayer for the good Estate of the Right Noble & Mighty Prince Thomas duke of Norfolk & his posterity as is at this present day used & accustomed in the Chappell of the sd Duke or as shall be delivered

unto him by the Bailiffs now being To whose good grace
for that this poor Town is unable to give any worthy
present for his Graces great pains and Travell taking ...

Another of the items in the constitution indicates not only the domination of the borough over church affairs but perhaps also hints at the nature of some of the recent disturbances. Religious quarrels were by no means over and it was ordered that anyone who held in his custody any of the books or ornaments rightly belonging to the church 'of what Nature kind or Quality so ever it be' should, before the coming Christmas, deliver them to the bailiffs and two of the Twelve who would 'take order for the well preserving of the same'. Any person attempting to embezzle or retain such books or ornaments would be fined 40s. And by 1st April of the following year a 'perfect Inventory' was to be made by the bailiffs and churchwardens (not, significantly, including the vicar) of all the ornaments, furniture, implements or lead belonging to the church. It would in future be the sole responsibility of the churchwardens to care for and preserve such goods.

The constitution also outlined the financial responsibilities of the churchwardens. They were to take charge of any bonds relating to the town and, with one or two exceptions, collect the annual revenues from all lands and cattle which the town owned. It was emphasised that they were neither to pay nor receive any other sums of money without the prior agreement of the Twelve - again this perhaps indicates the sort of problems the town had recently encountered. The audit of their annual accounts was to be made immediately following evening service on the Sunday after 'Twelfth day' at Christmas and it was to be held in the presence of a majority of the Twelve and Twenty-Four, with no other person present except the vicar or the curate.

The churchwardens were allowed to prosecute (with the advice of the Twelve) any of the tenants of the town lands who did not pay their

rents and they were to be responsible for repairs to

the Church, Steeple, Bells, School house & Town house
Adjoyning to the same School.

Although the relevant accounts do not survive, a few tattered copies of those made in the following century throw light on the sort of responsibilities that fell on the churchwardens of Eye.⁽⁵¹⁾ As far as the church was concerned, they arranged for repairs to the belltower, the chimes, the minister's desk, the churchyard gate, doors, windows and the bier. They ordered the laundering of church linen, the making of surplices and they prepared the ground for burials. They organised the ringing of bells, playing of the organ, all payments to the clerk and sexton and bought the bread and wine for communion. Outside the area of the church, their duties included repairing the town clock, the bridges, buying wine for visitors, organising poor relief (both money and clothing) - this included giving sums of money to Irish Protestants and soldiers - and they were responsible for the town armour. They were also closely involved in the day-to-day running of the grammar school, especially with repairs and re-decorations. It was laid down that the churchwardens as well as the bailiffs had to give their consent if for any reason the schoolmaster wished to be absent. They were to help in providing the necessary furniture and props for the school play; were responsible for the schoolmaster's salary and were (along with the bailiffs) empowered to give the master six months' notice should it be considered necessary. The seventeenth-century churchwardens' accounts show much of this work in operation.

As such 'great Trust & Confidence' was, according to the 1566 constitution, reposed in the churchwardens, it was felt that

the more care & Circumspection is necessary to be used
in the Choosing of them

and it was decided that this should henceforth be the sole responsibility of the Twelve who would both nominate and select the four men they considered most fit for the task. Control of the churchwardens

was now firmly in lay hands and it fell to the bailiffs to judge whether they had exercised their responsibilities properly. The churchwardens were now accountable only to them, all of which meant that the vicar of Eye no longer held any influence whatsoever over the office.

It is in regulations like this that we can probably detect by implication some of the grievances, discontent and perhaps even corruption which led to that 'Great Disorder' and the constitution was an attempt to clarify areas of responsibility and jurisdiction, especially in the uncertain domains of church and borough. Richard Thurkettle had considered the priest's function as central to the community, and not just in spiritual matters for he belonged to the mediaeval world where life was more unified and distinctions between sacred and secular had not become apparent. Those who saw things otherwise, who wished for clearer lines of demarcation between spiritual and lay affairs, and particularly those who advanced the cause of borough authority, were bound to clash with this older world view. It says a lot about Richard Thurkettle's forceful and influential character that the tensions did not finally break into disarray until after his death. The 1566 constitution, in which the vicar of Eye was divested of all power, marked symbolically in one sense the final fall of Richard Thurkettle and the world he stood for.

But despite the attempt in 1566 to make a clean sweep, to regulate local affairs and to prevent further disorder, at least one spectacular row broke out within a year or two - a friction which again revealed the bitterness between certain residents. Whether or not it had its genesis in theological disputes or in personal animosity, the focus of the quarrel centred once again on religious attitudes.

It concerned the will of William Woodman Webbe which, written only two days after the accession of Elizabeth, proved to be a

hornet's nest of controversy. The testator, doctrinally conservative by nature, had stipulated that the revenues of certain lands he had given were to be put towards payment of a clerk, the churchwardens and the poor. The land had been leased to John Gislingham for forty years and the annual rent of 49s 4d was to be distributed according to the will: 26s 8d to the clerk, 6s 8d to the churchwardens and 16s in bread, cheese and beer for the poor. According to the Eye documents, however, certain people accused Gislingham of breaking the conditions of the lease:

He plowed up all the ground: he altered the Fences & incroched & cutt of the Abbuttailes of divers of the landes etc. He forfeited all the Copiehold land of the Abbey, by pulling downe the house thereon & removing it to his owne: He would not paye his rent to the Churchwardayns according to the Will so as they could neyther paye the Clerke, nor themselves, nor distribute the rest to the poore: Neyther was any accompt made thereof by the Churchwardayns AD 1569: Himself would make the dole chiefly upon ringars, & such others as pleased him that were neyther needy nor worthye thereof. (52)

This reference to the 1569 churchwardens must implicate Edward Golding who was churchwarden himself that year and who, as a religious conservative, may well have turned a blind eye to John Gislingham's conduct. For, despite considerable legal wrangling over the conditions of the lease, it does seem to have been the last point that most offended. The official recording these events in the borough records (and attempting with little success to untangle the legal knots) returns several times to the fundamental issue of the pro-Catholic bias of John Gislingham's actions:

But Gislingham would neyther suffer the Church Wardeyns to paye the Clerkes wages: nor make the distribucon of the dole, according to the wyll, but the most part thereof he bestowed on the Ringers that superstitiozly bestowed their hole dayes work in ringing for Fyske & Anyell & Webbe etc. And the resydue upon suche as best pleased him, so as the poorest sorte had the smallest part thereof.

The indignant borough official maintained that the money for the poor should have first gone to the churchwardens who were responsible for its distribution and that, in taking this on himself,

John Gislingham was preventing the genuine cases of need from receiving what was due to them.

And to this dole of bread cheese & drinke, came a great sorte, neyther needy of the dole, neyther worthye thereof. There came also such store of Ryngers to this dole, that by such tyme as they had their share, & other of the needeles sort had gotten their partes, there was a small scrambling of bread cheese & drink left to the rest. This Abuse was often wisshed & talked of to be redressed but it was not; wch was a grief to some mens conscience in the town. (53)

Perhaps the abuse was never redressed for nothing conclusive about the dissension occurs in the borough records. What is clear, however, is that even after a decade of Elizabethan sovereignty, the religious question in Eye was as potent as ever. However, since the 1566 constitution, its arena had tended to shift from the church to the borough and it was against this new background that the old conflicts were played out. That religious divisions had become inextricably caught up with borough affairs is evident from a receipt dated 1569 concerning a gift of money to the parish church. The receipt was signed not by the vicar, not even by the churchwardens, but by the bailiffs of the town. The borough had gradually encroached on every area of town life and church affairs were clearly no longer the prerogative of ecclesiastics. (54)

Perhaps it was for this reason that Edward Golding chose to work so closely within the system rather than withdraw from parish life. In 1569 he was elected as churchwarden and, significantly, he shared that role with Nicholas Everard, a later well-known local recusant. The calibre of churchwardens in Eye was, unlike many places, astonishingly high and it may have been seen as one method by Catholic sympathisers to try and modify the influence of any extremist (particularly Puritan) element in the town. (55)

For the first ten years of Elizabeth's reign there was an uneasy tension in Eye which was reflected nationally, for Elizabeth moved

steadily in accordance both with her cautious political approach and her desire to offer as much individual spiritual freedom to her people as was possible. The government felt that recusancy as a problem would disappear naturally and of its own accord with the deaths of the old priests. Left alone, residual Catholicism would simply fade away - and certainly in the first decade of the Queen's reign recusancy was not a real problem.

The 1569 Catholic revolt changed all that. It was only following this, and the papal bull of 1570 which excommunicated her and urged her subjects to depose her, that Elizabeth imposed a more strict religious discipline.⁽⁵⁶⁾ A constant difficulty for the government was to distinguish between the majority of Catholics, like Sir Thomas Cornwallis, who strove to combine their loyalties to both monarch and faith, and those zealous Catholics involved in murder plots against the Queen. Many English Catholics were torn between allegiance to country and allegiance to faith, between what they felt was rightfully the Queen's and what was rightfully God's. One who found that dilemma especially agonising was Sir Thomas Cornwallis and he protested his secular loyalty in a letter to Lord Burghley:

Besydes hyr Majesty's dyspleasure, nothing dothe more trubble me, than that the contrarietye in consyence shulde be jugid faction, a thyng (I thanke God) farre frome my nature, yonge and ould ...

In a letter to the Queen he begged her

not to Juge or thynke that eny obstynacye, vaynglorye, malyce or the want of dutye, love or due allegiance to yowr hyghnes have thus longe wythdrawne me from the cummyng to Chyrche ... but the scruple I have heretofore conceyved therbye to offende Almyghtye God, hathe bene thonlye cause wyche movyd me herunto, the feare wheroff (wyche ys more to be weyde then all y^e perylls in the Worlde) as I do protest before Almyghtye God and yowr hyghness, hathe bene the very occasyon off myn offence. (57)

The question of political and spiritual loyalty was a thorny one and the people of the sixteenth century were in many ways having to work this out for the first time, not only in local issues as we have seen

but also in the wider arena. Jesuits on the mission to England were under strict instructions from Father Aquaviva, the General of their Order, not to mix themselves up in affairs of state, not to write to Rome about political matters or even to speak privately against the Queen.⁽⁵⁸⁾ And a priest, arrested complete with Catholic books and equipment for mass, said he wished Elizabeth 'Nester's years' though he did add that he thought Her Majesty's spiritual laws were not established according to God's laws.⁽⁵⁹⁾

Given the nature of sixteenth-century state religion, it was a dilemma which could never be entirely resolved and many half-hearted commitments and uneasy compromises had to be made. Edward Golding tried to influence events from within - and in many ways that meant keeping in closer contact with the borough than the church. As well as acting as churchwarden, he gave an annuity of five marks from some of his local land towards the maintenance of two parish clerks. If there was a vacancy for either of these posts for longer than three months, then it would be lawful for

the said Edward Golding his heirs or assignes to nominate one or two other meete person or persons for the parishe Clerke or clerkes to serve in the place of the said two clerkes or one of them that so shalbe wantinge ...

and, to emphasise the point still further, those responsible were to

accept admytte & allowe suche one or two Clerkes as so shall any tyme be appoynted by the said Edward Goldinge his heirs or assignes to serve as aforesaid, to be ther clerke or clerkes. (60)

Edward Golding was using to the full what power he had and no doubt the 'meete person' chosen as clerk would be in sympathy with his own outlook.

It was by no means uncommon for efforts to be made to maintain traditional Catholic piety by those who still persisted in hoping that the present religious settlement would prove no more durable than those of the past. In the 1560s, the influence of such conservatives may well have slowed down the pace of liturgical transition at the

local level. In R. B. Manning's study of Elizabethan Sussex there are several examples of this process continuing within individual parishes in that first decade of the Queen's reign.

Sometimes the resistance to religious innovations was led by the lord of the manor; elsewhere it was the parish priest or schoolmaster. At Racton the squire ... had prevented the election of churchwardens and ruled 'the whole parish'. In the parish of Findon the vicar, who also doubled as the schoolmaster, fortified this resistance ... (61)

At Arundel, the altar still stood in the parish church; at Battle and Lindfield the parishioners were very 'blind and superstitious' and everything was held in readiness 'to set up the Mass again within 24 hours' warning'. Also in Battle

when a preacher doth come and speak anything against the Pope's doctrine they will not abide but get them out of the church. They say that they are of no jurisdiction, but free from any bishop's authority; the schoolmaster is the cause of their going out, who afterwards in corners among the people doth gainsay the preachers. It is the most popish town in all Sussex. (62)

In Eye, a little knot of powerful men hoped to stem the advance of Protestantism by spreading their conservative net as far as possible over borough, church and school alike. Conservative practices were still being referred to in the official town records as late as 1573.⁽⁶³⁾ These crypto-Catholics entered fully into the life of the town and they wielded particular influence over the school. Indeed at one stage the schoolmaster was actually Laurence Lomax, a Catholic who, in 1577, was to have the distinction of being the first Eye recusant ever to be officially listed.⁽⁶⁴⁾ He it was who drew up the list of instructions for the school's new usher in which it was stated that the purpose of education in Eye School was for the glorie of our god Almyghtye.⁽⁶⁵⁾

For the Catholics of Eye, this was no trite cliché but saturated with meaning.

During the 1560s that rather more eminent Catholic, Sir Thomas Cornwallis, was busy rebuilding his house in neighbouring Brome. The management and supervision of his estates must have involved Edward Golding who acted as his general receiver, and it is mere speculation to wonder just how far their discourse extended beyond business into questions of common faith. At this period of his life, Sir Thomas seems to have retired from public life, which is a little surprising since his patron, the Duke of Norfolk, was immensely powerful in East Anglia and was perfectly capable of getting his supporters onto the bench even though they were known to be Catholic in sympathy.⁽⁶⁶⁾ However, his connections with the Duke were to prove rather perilous for Sir Thomas when his patron became involved in the trouble over his proposed marriage to Mary, Queen of Scots. When this affair blew up in 1569, Sir Thomas found himself under suspicion. Nor was he the only one for many private houses in Norfolk and Suffolk were searched for 'old church service books'; books and ornaments were found hidden away in some of them and even in secret places within churches as the people hoped 'for the Mass and idolatrous service again'.⁽⁶⁷⁾

The Duke of Norfolk was sent to the Tower in October 1569 and the government investigated all those people associated with him, including Sir Thomas and his son-in-law Thomas Kitson. They were summoned to appear before the Council at Windsor in October where they had to answer a long series of questions designed to discover if either of them was implicated in the Duke's political activities.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Sir Thomas described his last visit to the Duke at Kenninghall and informed the Council of the names of others who were present. These included

Sir Christopher Haydon, Sir John Sylliarde, Mr. Kittson, Mr. Clere, Mr. Hare, Nicholas Bacon, Henry Woodhouse, Sir Ralph Chamberlaine, Bassingbourn Gawdy, John Paston, Edward Grimstone, Sir Owen Hopton, William Honnings, and Mr. Townsend. ⁽⁶⁹⁾

This list of names includes not only many prominent Suffolk recusants

but also several gentlemen who had direct links with Eye. The Sulyards were landowners in the town and their name occurs fairly frequently in the Eye documents. Edward Grimstone also owned land in Eye and he represented the town in Parliament in the 1580s. William Honing married one of the daughters of Nicholas Cutler of Eye (a close associate of the Goldings).⁽⁷⁰⁾ Their son Edward was later to be another MP for Eye; he owned the manor of Eye Priory and lived at the old Abbey Farm, and it was he who recommended the first usher for Eye School.

Another friend of the Goldings referred to in the same list was Thomas Kitson. He was actually godfather to Edward's first son Thomas who had been born in 1564. In the five-year period between 1569 and 1574 he made a series of leases of the manor of Colston Bassett in Nottinghamshire to Edward Golding, and finally in 1574 he sold the entire manor to him. One of the leases states that Thomas Kitson made the grant

for the faithfull service and often travells done and susteyned by the said Edward Goldyng on the behalf of the said Thomas and for the good affection and favor he beareth towards Thomas Goldinge the sonne of the said Edward and godson to the said Thomas Kytson. (71)

Edward Golding certainly had friends in the right places and it is hardly a coincidence that they were among some of the leading Catholics in the county.

At their examination before the Council in 1569, Sir Thomas Cornwallis and Thomas Kitson were questioned about their beliefs and their attendance at the parish church. Thomas Kitson admitted that he 'did not receive the communion these four or five years', although he added that he 'sometimes came to sermons with the Lord Chief Justice', a reference, presumably, to the sermon preached at the beginning of each assize.⁽⁷²⁾

His father-in-law's replies to the Council have not been preserved but they can hardly have been very satisfactory for he was

not set free for almost a year. He was mostly confined during this time to the care of Bishop Jewel in an attempt to influence his religious views by daily association with one of the leading Anglican apologists of the day. From the details of Sir Thomas's expenses, it does not appear that he was treated with any harshness and he was certainly allowed to maintain contact with his family, friends and servants. These included Edward Golding, as well as Henry Aldham, a relation of Edward's wife Mirable. In 1570, Sir Thomas Cornwallis took part in a formal disputation with a number of Anglican divines. The Dean of Westminster sent an account of the proceeding to Cecil, from which it seems that Sir Thomas had not been much convinced by the arguments although the Dean felt there was still a hope of winning him over to the establishment side. Sir Thomas apparently approved of much of the new form of worship, including the use of the vernacular, but he wished all this to be confirmed by 'General Authority'. He was critical of many aspects of the Church of Rome and wished to see them reformed in accordance with the practices of the early church. He particularly repudiated the temporal claims of the Pope. The Dean of Westminster clearly held Sir Thomas in high regard and in his report he said he had seldom known

any of that syde so wyse and so conveniently learned,
more reasonable in Conference, or more nearour to
conformity.

He felt Sir Thomas would follow the truth when it became apparent to him and he advised gentle treatment of him for the time being on those matters which his conscience could not yet accept. He urged Cecil to use his own personal influence as Sir Thomas thought very highly of him. (73)

In a letter to Cecil at about this time, Sir Thomas indicated he was facing a considerable personal crisis

havyng now matter in hande, that towchythe me nearest
of all that I ever hade sythe I was borne.

Cecil had apparently pointed out to Sir Thomas the sorrow he would bring to his wife and family if he remained obstinate, and Sir Thomas replied that

the care and sorow off my lovyng wyffe, the crye and lamentyng of my poore chyl dren and servantes ... are off force to move a manne of more constancye than I have.

He believed the anger of the Prince and the danger it involved were terrible, but he affirmed that

the danger toffende Almyghtye God ys, or owghte to be, more Weyghed then all the perylls in the Worlde besydes

and he maintained that it was this alone which had kept him from conforming. Having described his inner conflict, he then stated rather unexpectedly that he was, in fact, prepared now to submit. He wished to clear himself of any suspicion of infidelity to the Queen and he wrote that he was more moved by her clemency

wyche I certeynly know to have proceadyd ffro me hyr owne person

than he would have been by any threats or loss of goods. He wished the Queen knew all the thoughts of his heart and his love for her

ffrom the tyme I knew hyr fyrst as a childe in the prynce my master hys house untill the daye beyng now my leage ladye.

He maintained that he would apply himself to obey her laws in matters of religion

as Almyghtye God wyll gyve me grace to be further persuadyd

and he would defend her against all foreign princes. He said he was not well in body or mind and he begged Cecil to see that

at the Fyrst I be drawne no Further then to cumyng to Chyrche wheare I wyll use my self (by Godes grace) to want offence to eny menne and not by devyse to be pressyd further, wyche myght make me eyther an hypocryte or desperate, but sufferyd without offence to eny good manne, for a tyme to forbear the rest, untill Almyghtye God (If that be his holly will) shall suffer me to (be) more fully persuadyd off the rest. (74)

Sir Thomas's interior struggle illustrates the difficulty in which so many Catholics found themselves. Like most other gentlemen of his time, he had a tradition of loyalty to the crown which made him reluctant to disobey the law. Many Catholics conformed outwardly in an attempt to avoid trouble, even though they did not give interior consent to the services they attended in their parish churches. But Sir Thomas had a heightened conscience and even after an enforced confinement from October to June there is still a considerable reservation in the submission he finally made. He would go to church, but no more than that was to be asked of him. His biographers write:

He was an intelligent man who thought a good deal about his religious position, and it seems likely that he was very uneasy about the step he was now taking. His mind may well have been disturbed by the controversies in which he had been engaged and by the obvious advantages of doing what he was asked to do. In this uncertainty, he at length yielded and with a man of less sensitive conscience and less determination, this first step would have led - as it did with many hundreds of his contemporaries - to full acceptance of the established church. (75)

Sir Thomas's conflict was reflected to some extent in his family life. His sons probably congratulated him on having acted sensibly. Both William and Charles apparently accepted the Anglican settlement with little difficulty. But his second daughter Elizabeth (who was married to Thomas Kitson) was certainly a recusant later on and perhaps she and other of his Catholic friends in the Suffolk squirearchy regretted his failure to stand firm.

Edward Golding had been in touch with Sir Thomas during this difficult time. The Cornwallis papers give details of business trips made in London and Salisbury.⁽⁷⁶⁾ It would be valuable to have had his reactions to Sir Thomas's submission, but what little evidence there is suggests that he too outwardly conformed throughout the sixties. He was almost certainly among the twenty men and thirty horses which accompanied Sir Thomas on his journey back home to Brome in August 1570.

When Sir Thomas Cornwallis returned to his rather quieter life in Brome and made his somewhat half-hearted attempt to conform, Elizabeth had been on the throne for nearly twelve years. What had been happening to the rest of Eye during that period? How had the town settled down under the religious compromise the Queen and her ministers had worked out, a compromise intended to allow room for diversity of outlook?

In the first year of her reign, the Eye wills were still solidly in the traditional Catholic mode, with one exception. This was Anne Seman, widow of the Protestant James, who made her will in June 1559:

First I bequeth my soule to thinfinit mercye of almightye god beseeching him most humblye to receyve the same unto the blessed companie of his most dere and elect people for whom and me I trust assuredlye the kingdome of god is preparad ...

Anne Seman was one of the very few testators in Eye at this time who did not use the services of the conservative scribe, Thomas Rippes, and most of her bequests went to her in-laws, the 'Protestant' Blows. The first will of 1560 marked a departure from the recent trend of traditionalism, although its preamble does hint at the theological confusion shared by many people of the time. Anthonye Gyssinge left his soul to

allmightie god my savior and redeamar trustynge earnestlie and faithfullie to be accompanied with all the holye companie of heaven.

The only explicitly conservative will of the early sixties was that of Thomas Jennor, and once again the scribe Thomas Rippes was involved, although this time as executor. (This was the latter's last will, incidentally, for he too died later in 1561.)

The general pattern of the sixteen wills made during the first decade of the Queen's reign can only be described as 'indeterminate' or 'confused'. Four referred to redemption by the saviour yet also called on the assistance of the holy company of heaven. However, we must not presume that doctrinal details were necessarily always a

burning issue with people and it is not surprising that the phrases used by testators were frequently an amalgam of those heard in the Elizabethan service and those passed on by the earlier tradition. Of the sixteen wills of the sixties, one expressed explicitly Protestant beliefs, one Calvinist ('So that after this mutable lieffe I may reste with the electe') and two were traditional. One of these was Thomas Nele's and it was the last Eye will ever to be written in the Catholic formula. This was in 1567 and it is perhaps no coincidence that among his witnesses was another Thomas Rippes - son of the scribe who had died six years earlier.

The testators who cannot be categorised simply left their souls to almighty God. This, of course, could mean anything but it was not an infrequent device used by Catholics who sheltered under the deliberate ambiguity of the phrase. It was certainly the method Richard Thurkettle had adopted at the very beginning of the decade.

The new decade of the seventies saw a stiffening of attitudes on both sides of the theological fence. After the 1570 papal bull in which Elizabeth was excommunicated, Catholic resistance became more overt and took the form of recusancy, refusal to attend the parish church. (The statutory duty of church attendance included receiving the sacrament at least three times a year - usually at Easter, Whitsun and Christmas.) Instead of continuing to compromise, the hardening of attitudes forced many Catholics to decide exactly where they should draw the line and to make a more conscious personal decision. In a sermon delivered at East Grinstead, William Overton referred to the change that had come over the Catholics in Sussex since the publication of the papal bull:

I wis, I wis, there are many cursed Calves of Basan abroad, which since they sucked the bull that came from Rome, have given over all obedience and allegiance both to God and the queen; for before that time they could be content to come to the church and hear sermons, and to receive the sacraments, and to use the common prayer with the rest of the congregation of Christ, and so forth. They were conformable

in all respects, and content to do anything that beseeemed good Christians to do; but since they sucked that mad bull, they are become even brain sick calves, froward, stubborn, disobedient, in word and deed, not to be led or ordered by any reason. (77)

The seventies also saw the first arrivals of the missionary priests in England bringing with them the pronouncements of the Council of Trent which marked the beginning of the Catholic Reformation.

Sir Thomas Cornwallis continued to attend the parish church at Brome in an effort to conform, although he was clearly regarded as a Catholic and his name appeared on a list of 'Catholicks in Inglande' compiled in 1574. (These names of 'influential persons', apparently prepared in the interests of the Queen of Scots, included other members of the Suffolk gentry who had links with Eye and its locality: Sir Henry Bedingfield, Sir John Sulyard, Sir Ralph Chamberlayne, Sir Thomas Kitson, Henry Drury, Sir Owen Hopton, Lord Vaux and his three sons.)⁽⁷⁸⁾ Sir Thomas also did his best to help his kinsman, Mr. Hare, who had refused to conform and who was ordered to appear before the Bishop's chancellor. The Bishop was under pressure from the Council to take steps against recusants and he wrote to Sir Thomas that Mr. Hare would do better to follow his good example in resorting to church, hearing sermons and otherwise conforming himself. A letter written by Sir Thomas to his son-in-law Thomas Kitson in the early seventies reveals the sort of struggle many Catholics faced at this time.

The time is such in which we now live as it would comber a wiser head than I have now to give you advice which way to proceed and therefore can do but humbly pray God to direct you to take such course as may tend to the preservation of your credit and reputation and the best safety of your person. (79)

The mid-seventies saw a new Bishop in the Diocese: this was Bishop Freke who entered the see in 1575 on the death of Bishop Parkhurst. Norwich was a disturbed Diocese from the religious point of view, with the bench supported both by a strong Puritan faction and by a strong Catholic group of JPs. Dr. Hassall Smith has pointed

out that there were probably more Catholic sympathisers among the gentry in Norwich Diocese than anywhere else, except perhaps London.⁽⁸⁰⁾ This is confirmed by the personal memoirs of the Jesuit priest, John Gerard, who wrote that in East Anglia the Catholics were

mostly from the better classes; none, or hardly any, from the ordinary people, for they are unable to live in peace, surrounded as they are by most fierce Protestants. The way, I think, to go about making converts in these parts is to bring the gentry over first, and then their servants, for Catholic gentle folk must have Catholic servants. (81)

The Tudor monarchs, of course, were only able to enforce their policies with the co-operation of officials at every level within the localities. In the days when the Catholic Duke of Norfolk had dominated the region, Bishop Parkhurst had deferred to him, but after the Duke's death in 1572 the Bishop felt able to follow his own inclinations and he made sure that radical Protestants were appointed to the bench. The new Bishop, however, tried to control this Puritan domination and he appointed JPs who were 'backward in religion'.⁽⁸²⁾ Consequently he became involved in a series of fierce disputes with Puritan JPs who claimed that many recusants who had once trembled at his name now came to his table.⁽⁸³⁾

Sir Thomas Cornwallis was one of those who was on good terms with Bishop Freke and the Puritans accused the Bishop of allowing him too great an influence with his officials, maintaining that Sir Thomas had taken care to settle as chancellor of the Diocese one who

as being at his devotion, might follow his direction.

(This was a reference to Dr. William Masters who had studied at Rome. His mother was a recusant and he himself came under suspicion. In 1575, a Puritan was appointed in his place, but after a fierce dispute Dr. Masters was re-appointed - a considerable triumph for the Catholic group.)⁽⁸⁴⁾ The Puritans also alleged that when other Catholics criticised Sir Thomas for 'resortinge somtymes to church and sermons' he would answer

If a man sate at dynner and heare a foule prate, shall he rise and goe away and not be counted himself a more foole.

Other accusations concerned Sir Thomas's boast about his former secretary, Thomas Lawrence, who had since become a monk in Brussels, and he is also said to have bestowed the benefices in his gift on papist priests, non-residents and unlearned men.

The Bishop's enemies painted a picture of a Bishop hand in glove with papists. They described a dinner in 1578 at which the Bishop entertained various guests, including Sir Thomas Cornwallis. The Bishop complained about the poverty of his see and talked about trying to get translated to Worcester, whereupon Sir Thomas is said to have replied:

... nay that shall you not, my L(ord), we will rather contribute somewhat ...

and immediately he offered an annual payment of £10 to the Bishop, other guests proffering similiar amounts. Bishop Freke's opponents also quoted an 'obstinate papist' called Downes who had told a friend

tush, tush, let the protestants prate and talke what they will, I am sure we have the Bishop on our side. (85)

Even allowing for Puritan exaggeration, it is clear that Sir Thomas was on good terms with the Bishop and this goodwill would have extended the arm of security to other local adherents who could count on Sir Thomas's support.

By the middle of the 1570s, the people of England had enjoyed almost two decades of stability. A new generation had grown up knowing only the Anglican church of the Elizabethan settlement: young adults, like John Shene, Edward Mallows, Mary Scrooke, Grace Chappell, Pleasance Balles, daughter of the shoemaker, all of whom had been only a few months old when Elizabeth came to the throne. They were seventeen or eighteen when, in 1576, the government decided to celebrate the Queen's accession and the spirit of unity by a

Fourme of Prayer with Thankesgivinge to be used of all
the Queenes Majesties loving subjectes every yeere,
the 17th of November, being the day of her Highnes
entrie to her Kingdom. (86)

The first stanza of the prayer expressed the gladness her loving
subjects were supposed to be feeling:

Be light and glad, in God rejoyce,
Which is our strength and stay:
Be joyfull and lift up your voyce,
For this most happie daye.
Sing, sing, O sing unto the Lorde,
With melodie most sweete:
Let heart and tongue in one accorde,
as it is just and meete.

Glad as most of them probably were, of more immediate concern to the
people of Eye that year of 1576 was the tragedy surrounding their
vicar, John Hewar.

He had become vicar of St Peter's in February 1563 after the
death of John Page the previous year.⁽⁸⁷⁾ Since that time, he had
settled down to the life of an Anglican minister, devoted both to
parish and to family. He was a relatively young man when he first
came to Eye, with his wife and two small children (John, whose age is
unknown, and Grace who was about five years old at the time). The
ensuing years produced a succession of offspring born between 1565
and 1575: Mirable, Eleanor, Lawrence, Martha and Margaret.

For thirteen years John Hewar served the parish of Eye, but
little is known of him. His incumbency is remarkable only for its
colourlessness. Richard Thurkettle had been a dominating figure in
the community, as was George Peachell, a later vicar, to be.
References to these two abound in the Eye documents, giving the
impression of men vigorously involved in many aspects of town life.
Not so with John Hewar. Perhaps he was a victim of the by now
thoroughly denuded status of the Eye clergyman. Perhaps he was
preoccupied with other strains - of being a married priest, torn
between conflicting loyalties to family and parishioners, or the
financial constraints that that implied of trying to bring up a

large family on a small stipend. For this was all a new situation. The priests who had married during the short reign of Edward had had little time to consolidate family life, but the Elizabethan period revealed the realities of their situation, and commitment both to parish and family may have posed many unforeseen problems for an unsuspecting priest.

Was John Hewar a victim of these tensions? Did he feel himself to be merely a puppet of borough officials? Could he not cope with the continuing religious divisiveness of his parish? Had he spiritual problems himself, conflicts of an interior nature? Or marital strains? Whatever it was, life became intolerable for this unhappy man and he stunned the parish one Sunday morning in August by hanging himself from an apple tree in the vicarage garden.

An inquest was held at Eye a few days later on 3rd September with the bailiffs, Thomas Mallows and Robert Clarke, acting as coroners. (88) The inquest heard how John Hewar came out of the vicarage between six and seven in the morning, placed a seven-foot ladder against a tree in the orchard

and fixed an halter and hanged himself till one James Collen cut him down (by a knife delivered him by one Robert Clerke servant to William Byggs) before he was quite dead

and that he

lingered on till three or four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day and then died and was a felo de se.

His daughter Grace, who was then aged about eighteen, gave evidence to the inquest and told the coroners that she had met her father that same morning by the north hall door as she was

going to put out her milk and feed her kyttens, and returning again she espyd hym hanging on a Parsseye apple tree, and she shrieked out and went and told her mother who was in bed.

James Collen reported that he was in his father's shop, with his servant Thomas Gyssing, when he heard in the street

a lamentable noise made by the said Grace Hewer going to Mr. Lomaxes to call for help

and he thereupon ran through the guildhall yard into the vicarage yard where he saw the vicar's wife holding up her husband by the feet. James Collen went up to the tree and cut down the vicar 'who was not then fully dead'. Thomas Gyssing confirmed that he had seen his master do this.

A suicide's goods were wholly forfeited and a letter of attorney dated the following January instructed all the debts of John Hewar to be collected for the town's use. His widow, Anne, brought a legal action for the retrieval of some of his goods, but it was not until 23rd August 1578 - almost two years after her husband's death - that she was granted 'A deed of gyft' by the bailiffs of the town of all the late vicar's goods. The deed stipulates that the bailiffs of Eye must grant to Anne Hewar

all those goodes Chattelles debtes dutyes & rightes which the said John Hewar at the tyme of his death had or was possessed of ... And which unto the handes & possession of the said Baylies burgesses & Comonalty are nowe fallen & come ... by reason & vertue of the Quenes mates graunt by hir letters patente unto the said baylis burgesses & Comonaltye made & graunted, as by the said l^{res} patente ... (89)

Although suicide was a criminal act, the ecclesiastical authorities chose to turn a blind eye to what had happened. Perhaps the scandal would have been too great or perhaps they were motivated by genuine compassion for his wife and children. Whatever the reason, John Hewar was given a Christian burial in his own parish on 29th August 1576 and, according to the Induction Books of the Diocese of Norwich, the next vicar took over the parish 'on the natural death of the previous incumbent'. (90)

The new vicar, Thomas Williams, came to Eye in December of that same year. He was lax in keeping up the parish register and there is a gap of over three years until George Peachell succeeded him in 1580. George Peachell was as meticulous as Richard Thurkettle had been in

maintaining the parish records and his incumbency was to last an equally long time. But there the similarity ends. For George Peachell was solidly in the tradition of the new Church of England clergyman: a married man with several children. And when his first wife Elizabeth died only two months after the birth of their fifth child (five children had been born in six years) he had married again within the space of a year - this time to Ann Northfield, a widow.

George Peachell served the parish for nearly thirty years until his death in 1609. Despite his remark that 'the poore vicaredge is maymed by evill customes' (91) - a reference perhaps to the sad history of John Hewar - the sheer consistency of his incumbency must have helped to stabilise the town under the Elizabethan settlement and he took Eye not only into the next century but also into the next reign.

He first came to the town when those children born into the Elizabethan era were themselves beginning to produce the next generation. By this time Eye was resuming something not unlike its pre-Reformation equilibrium and it would be tempting to see the death of Edward Golding in September 1580 as marking the end of the storms and trials of the past fifty years. But that would not be entirely true for, although the Catholics of Eye did not disrupt life in any dramatic way in subsequent years, the religious debate was far from defunct.

Recusancy in Eye was consistent with the pattern over the rest of England: there was little overt non-conformity for the first decade of Elizabeth's reign but, with the hardening of attitudes that occurred on both sides in the seventies, the local Catholics came to take more and more of a stand.

Lawrence Lomax was the first recusant to be officially named; he is listed in the 1577 Returns of Recusants under the Inns of

Chancery.⁽⁹²⁾ However, he is not named in the Diocesan Returns of the same year - an indication of either the Bishop of Norwich's 'soft' approach to Catholics or (more likely) the reluctance of local churchwardens to present offenders.⁽⁹³⁾ In that particular Diocesan list no individuals from Eye are included, although there are many familiar names of local gentry who lived in neighbouring areas. An analysis of Suffolk recusants in 1577 reveals a total of thirty-four for the county: six esquires, eleven gentlemen, thirteen gentlewomen, two priests and two 'inferior men'.

Lawrence Lomax's name does not occur again in any of the later lists of recusants, although his son James and another descendant (also called Lawrence) are named in various Diocesan lists between 1614 and 1685.⁽⁹⁴⁾ The sixteenth-century Lawrence Lomax remained a crypto-Catholic but evidently sired several generations of overt recusants. His conservative sympathies did not prevent his holding local offices - as indeed was the case with other conservative citizens of Eye - and for a time he was schoolmaster (perhaps influencing William Flacke, an Eye scholar who eventually became a Jesuit priest). His interest in the school never waned; he became a trustee and later was to devise the instructions for the new usher. He acted as bailiff in the mid-nineties⁽⁹⁵⁾ and his name even appears as an (unspecified) church official during the visitation to Eye by Bishop Scambler on 22nd May 1593, although significantly the record of his name has been rather obviously deleted in the Diocesan Consignation Book which might suggest it was a little too 'hot' for ecclesiastical officials.⁽⁹⁶⁾

If Lawrence Lomax, Edward Golding and Nicholas Everard are indicative, Catholics in Elizabethan Eye tended to blend with the local church and community rather than separate from it. This may have been a conscious policy in order to try and ensure some continuing influence in local affairs. On the other hand, the government's hard-line policy against recusants should not be

discounted as it forced many Catholics to compromise by attending their parish churches.

Until 1581, the government's main weapon had been the weekly fine of twelve pence for non-attendance at church. This fine was not very successful and appears to have been levied only sporadically by churchwardens. (There was strong social pressure not to betray one's neighbours, and in other cases churchwardens were bribed not to exact the appropriate penalties. And it did not bode well in Eye for the smooth-running of the anti-recusant machinery when several of the churchwardens there were known themselves to be crypto-Catholics.)

Renewed concern by the government about the international danger of a revived Catholicism resulted in the 1581 Recusancy Act, which extended the law of treason to include anyone who sought to reconcile any of the Queen's subjects to the Church of Rome and also raised the twelve pence fine to the enormous sum of £20 a month. The rigour with which statutes were enforced depended, of course, on the enthusiasm of those officers entrusted with executing them and some were notoriously unreliable. All the Elizabethan recusancy laws were enforced in a haphazard manner and a considerable number of Catholics lived with comparatively little interference from government. In an attempt to counteract the unsuccessful system of fines, the government tried other methods of economic pressure and in 1585 recusants were informed that if they co-operated in contributing to the cost of forming a troop of 'light horse' then the government would

qualify some part of the extremity of the punishment that otherwise the law doth lay upon them. (97)

Sir Thomas Cornwallis's name heads the list of thirteen Suffolk gentry who decided they were willing to co-operate in this way and it is quite likely that the 1588 payment of £25 towards the defence of the realm by a Widow Golding of Eye was similarly in lieu of recusancy fines. This must almost certainly be Mirable Golding, now returned to Suffolk from her Nottinghamshire home after the death of Edward. (98)

A similar

payment that same year was by John Thurston, a lawyer from a local Eye family.⁽⁹⁹⁾ His name appears in the Eye Borough Charter of 1574 and he was also the recipient of a gift in William Herring's will because of his 'goodness' to the testator. William Herring was another of Catholic sympathy in Eye and it was almost certainly his widow who was asked to contribute towards a troop of 'light horse' in the 1590s.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ She sought to be discharged from this obligation and, in a letter on her behalf, Henry Gawdy asked Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy to use his influence at court with Sir Nicholas Bacon in order to procure a discharge for Mrs. Herring as she was at that time involved in litigation about certain lands and was, he added, 'well disposed'. The connections of the Catholic families locally remained very close.

Yet another recusant was Nicholas Everard. He was of another old Eye family which later moved into adjacent Cranley Hall. He was named as a recusant in 1593 and again in 1594.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ On the former occasion he owed £300 for his conviction and the following year he owed £100, but in both instances a mysterious postscript indicated that he ought not to be summoned for these debts 'And he is quit'. In 1596 he was named again - this time with his wife.⁽¹⁰²⁾

One woman took her recusancy further and was actually excommunicated (in all likelihood this was for being absent from communion).⁽¹⁰³⁾ Margaret Irman's name appears on a 'Signification of Excommunication' which was a document issued by the Bishop when an offender had remained stubbornly disobedient for forty days after public excommunication. (This document was, in effect, a request to Chancery to issue a writ of 'significavit' to the sheriff of a county who was then responsible for the arrest and imprisonment of the offender.) Excommunication was the church's main sanction to force obedience to its decrees, but its effectiveness did, of course, depend on the amount of fear it engendered. Evidence suggests this was not very great and a group of Puritan ministers complained in 1590 that the

penalty of excommunication held no terror and 'many like to continue in that state'.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ Clearly, it could only be successful if the offender was ostracised by society - which was what was supposed to happen but rarely did.

The name Irman is an unusual one in Eye and it might be that Margaret Irman was one of the two women who, in 1603 according to the vicar, had recently come to the town but who

doo refuse to com to the church and recevye the
comunion. (105)

It was probably easier to report such 'foreigners' to the authorities rather than people who were well known in the community and whose families had been there for generations, but some of these too did not escape and it may be significant that more of them were being named as the century drew to its close. In 1597, they included Eleen Shene, Edward Townsend (described as a gentleman) and Thomas Harvye. (The latter may well have been a relation of the Goldings as their mother's maiden name was Harvey.)⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The next year's list mentions only Frances Braddock (described variously as widow or single woman, although in some sources she is described as the wife of Michael Todd). Her name appears regularly in subsequent years.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The number of recusants increased at the beginning of the seventeenth century and many names were repeated year after year. In 1614, for instance, eight people of Eye were listed.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ Elizabeth Barnes, a single woman, and Rose Barnes (wife of Nicholas and possibly Elizabeth's mother) were both named in 1614 as well as in four subsequent years. Alice Fanner, a widow, was another regular name, as was Lawrence Lomax's son James, another son of Mr. Norton (no Christian name given) and the three sons of Mr. Rookwood who, until 1614, had been resident in Euston. In all those cases where a distinction is drawn, these people came under the title of 'Popishe Recusantes' as opposed to 'Schismaticall Recusantes'. In other words,

Catholicism rather than Puritanism was the problem in Eye, which is a picture similar to that in Sussex where R. B. Manning found that Separatism was rare during the Elizabethan period

since the great majority of Puritans had not yet abandoned the hope of remodelling the established church along the lines of the Swiss churches. (109)

At this most localised level of history, the pattern of Catholic descent in certain influential families can be seen very clearly, and those same names suffering religious persecution in the sixteenth century were also enduring similar difficulties in the next. In 1654, Henry Vaux of Eye - a descendant of the recusant Vaux family - was in trouble for his faith, as were two of the Lomaxes. Temperance, the wife of Nathaniel Deye of Eye, was described as a papist in 1725. Several members of the Deye family appear in the sixteenth-century records and it may be significant that one of them, Margaret, was a maidservant to that prominent local Catholic, William Herring. (110)

The indomitable Goldings went further than most and produced a whole line of 'zealous Romanists'. Edward's grandson, Sir Edward Golding (created the first baronet in 1642) and described as one of the 'popish gentry', actually gave up his baronetcy to become a Capuchin friar. His eldest son John followed his example, renounced his rights of heirship in favour of his younger brother Charles and also entered the Franciscan Order. By this time, the Goldings had established themselves in the Nottinghamshire estate of Colston Bassett, which Edward had originally acquired from Sir Thomas Kitson. (It is characteristic of them that several local closes were given personal family names - like Aldham Bank, which was named after Edward's wife, Mirable Aldham.) It was especially noted in the seventeenth century that there was an unusually high proportion of Roman Catholics in the parish of Colston Bassett and in 1669 Lady Golding's house was described as the meeting place of popish recusants. (111)

It may have been (as is generally considered) the spiritual sustenance provided by the missionary priests of the 1580s and 1590s which helped preserve the Catholic faith in England, but we should not underestimate the sort of hereditary propensity clearly possessed by families like the Goldings. This could variously be described as zeal, integrity, leadership, a passionate devotion to their faith, or (from another angle) stubbornness, self-aggrandisement and aggression. Whatever in truth was the nature of their qualities, the Goldings never did things by half. In the fifteenth century they dominated Eye society and were prominent in the life and upkeep of the church. In the sixteenth century their position remained inviolate and they continued as a major influence in town affairs, judiciously following the scent of power as it gradually transferred from the arena of the church to that of the borough. And in the seventeenth century they brought the same steadfastness and vigour to the little parish in Nottinghamshire which, once again, they also dominated.

It is at this local level that we perceive most clearly what is paramount in the historical process: not movements or theories or generalisations, but those individual characteristics through which the variations, advances, regressions and diversions of history percolate; the human filter which animates or annihilates the currents of change. For recusants cannot be categorised as one thing or the other. They were simply people, people who responded idiosyncratically to the circumstances in which they found themselves. For every one who made a stand, another contented himself with occasional displays of conformity - a practice which might protect any number of crypto-Catholics in a community and it is for this reason we can never assume that the number of recusants detected at a visitation reflects the whole story or the true extent of Catholic sympathy. For every zealous and active and untiring Golding, there must have been many like Sir Thomas Cornwallis who, although twice imprisoned for his faith,

made half-hearted attempts to conform and who, at the end of his life, just wished to be left alone with his books to think and contemplate. His was simply another and different reaction to the currents of change and, while others were making overt demonstrations of their faith, Sir Thomas as an old man just sat quietly, pondering the interior conflicts his era had thrust upon him. His search for truth never wavered. He acquired many maps and books, writing to his bookseller 'The book of comparaisn between Mahomet and Calvin should be very welcome unto me' and ordering

the globe of the earth and the heavens for though I be going out of the world yet am I desiring before I leave it to have some further acquaintance and knowledge therof, and that for this respect ... because there is nothing that doth more raise and lift a man's heart and mind to the love and admiration of his creator than the contemplation of the frame and constitution of the heaven and earth. (112)

But for most people in Eye, who had neither the time nor perhaps the inclination for such thought, the Elizabethan settlement meant just that: settling down after the storms of the past, accepting the religious compromise and thankful for the political stability the Queen's reign had brought them. Of the thirty-two wills of the last three decades of the century, twenty-two can be categorised as definitely Protestant, one as Calvinist and nine as indeterminate. The town was becoming solidly Anglican and the Queen seems to have been well-loved. An unknown borough official wrote quite gratuitously and spontaneously in a town book (apropos of something entirely different) of her Majesty's 'most happye raigne' and numerous baby Elizabeths were growing up in Eye.⁽¹¹³⁾ (Earlier in the century, in the thirties, forties and fifties, the name Elizabeth tended to occur in baptisms about five times in every decade. By the time the Queen had celebrated her first ten years on the throne, there were more than double that number, and in the 1580s an astonishing twenty-seven Elizabeths made their appearance in Eye.) There was no greater - or

simpler - token of the people's regard than this. And, despite the occasional excitement (as when Francis Pretty of Eye accompanied Thomas Cavendish in his circumnavigation of the world),⁽¹¹⁴⁾ the picture which emerges from contemporary documents is of life resuming its normal, perhaps even monotonous, round of regularity, the conflicts and unrest now largely a thing of the past.

For it is only occasionally in history that wider happenings and deeper wounds infuse the daily round with their own particular colours, adding pungency and enlarging the ordinary, offering a new perspective (perhaps even sometimes too great a significance) to events which might otherwise have passed unnoticed. The sixteenth century was one of those times and, as it drew to a close, Eye returned to a more mundane normality, to trivial rather than spectacular quarrels, to pleasures and pettinesses more localised in nature, tinged no longer by issues penetrating from a wider world.

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 Will of William Herring, 1569
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 'Item whereas at the parlyam^t holden the 24 of
 October in the xxxixth yere of hir highnes most
 happye raigne An Act was made for the relief of
 the poore ...'
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CHAPTER 9THE BOROUGHA secular epilogue

Running parallel with the religious changes in Eye was a concern for increasing self-government and the gradual erosion of the church's monopoly in the sixteenth century presented more and more opportunity for those who wished to pursue this matter of self-determination.

Eye had become a borough as early as 1408 with a chartered freedom for its burgesses from all manner of toll payable anywhere in the kingdom. The charter was thought to have originated under King John, although more recent scholarship has thrown doubt upon this.⁽¹⁾ Officials in the middle of the sixteenth century sought to have this ancient charter confirmed and on the last day of August 1559, the bailiffs, John Whetingham and Thomas Mallows, one of the churchwardens, Thomas London, and William Herring and Robert London went to nearby Redgrave Hall, the home of Lord Keeper Bacon, to try and gain his influence with the Queen. They took with them a 'present of capons and chekons' and on 4th September William Herring and Thomas Mallows once more visited Redgrave and

opteynyd of hym upon ther sute the confirmacon of ther
chartre for the whiche thei payed thes costes and charges
... and so brought it home with them. (2)

When the charter was drawn up, Elizabeth had been on the throne for less than a year and the portrait in the initial letter of the text shows her as a young woman of twenty-five, right at the beginning of her long reign.

Richard Thurkettle disapproved of all this, although it is not clear why. In his censure, he lumped the affair together with other iniquities - like the sales of lead and the sales from the guildhall -

for most of which he held his enemy Willam Thrower culpable. Perhaps it was all the expense involved that caused his disapprobation. He clearly felt that corruption was rife in Eye and that money was being wasted, money which could have been used more effectively for the genuine relief and improvement of the town, and he made a point of recording in his book the costs involved: (3)

The Charges for renewynge the Town Charter

In primis for the confirmacon of the seale	xx ^s	iiii ^d
Item, for the fynne	x	
Item for the wrytyng and enrollment	xlvi	viii
Item for a velome skynne drawyng and floryshyng the same	x	
Item for waxe and lace	iiii	
Item for thexaminacon	iiii	
Sum totall	iiii ^{li}	xv ^s

He also noted that Robert London claimed 29s 10d as his expenses for 'Rydyng to London to renewe the Charter' and that William Thrower received £5 6s 8d 'for the Renewyng of the town Charter as it apperythe in the Cownte booke'.

Richard Thurkettle was deeply suspicious about these amounts of money and probably felt they were exorbitant. It is, of course, impossible to tell without seeing the original accounts just what expenses were genuinely involved and whether or not Robert London and William Thrower were indeed abusing the system. But from some later town accounts, when a group of men made a return trip from Eye to London on borough business, it would seem that their expenses worked out at just over ten shillings each. (4)

Eye's status was further raised when, in 1572, it returned two burgesses to Westminster as its first Members of Parliament. This had first been laid down under the 1566 constitution but a memo of a 1571 committee of the House of Commons named Eye as one of nine towns which had failed to send their representatives to the last Parliament. (5)

Selection of MPs was in the hands of the corporation of Eye and they chose several different representatives in the seventies, eighties

and nineties. (6) When they did not re-select Edward Grimston (originally chosen in 1588) he apparently had his revenge by ordering the bailiffs to pay forty shillings towards the provisioning of the Royal Household. As it turned out, this was contrary to the terms of the town's charter, but it involved twelve members of the corporation having to appear before the 'Clerk of the Green close' in London to plead their case. All the papers relating to this episode are endorsed

All these troubles and charges grew by and upon displeasure taken against the Town by Mr. Grimston for that he was not chosen one of the burgesses of the Parliament as once before he was. (7)

The expense accounts of these twelve men show clearly just what was involved in a trip to London. Their expenses are headed

'Rydinge Charges, dyett & horsehyre & Boate hyre'. (8)

Item payed for dyet of 12 persons for horsemeat, mending of sadles & shooinge of horses the same daye we tooke our Jorney being 30 of May	s.	d.
	xii	
Item the same night at Colchester for supper & breakfast the next morninge & for wyne fyer & horsemeat there	ix	iiii
Item for dynner & horsemeat at Chelmesforde the same daye being the last of Maye	vii	vi
Item for supper wyne & fyer the same night at London	vi	viii
Item in dyett at London the first of June & for wyne & Boatehyer to the Corte	viii	
Item the second of June the dyett of viii persons at dynner at the Greyhounde in Holborne	x	
Item the same daye for boate hyer twyse to & from the Corte at Grenewiche	vi	viii
Item in wyne & other Charges that night at our returne from the Corte to London	v	vi
Item the thirde of June for the dynner of divers persons wyne fyer & rewardes in the howse at our Cominge awaye from London	xiii	iiii
Item horsemeat duringe the aboade in London	xiii	iiii
Item at Chelmesforde the same night supper & the next morning being 4 of June breakfast: wyne, fyre, & horsemeat	xiiii	

Item at Maldon the sayd 4 daie of June, dynner & horsemeat	vii	vi
Item the same night at Colchester supper, & the next morning being the 5th daie breakfast, wyne fyre & horsemeat	xiii	iiii
Item at Eye the same night Supper & wyne (with iii ^s iiii ^d bestowed on fresshe fyshe at Colchester)	vi	iiii
Item for the hyer of iii horses to London & home againe about the sayd busyness	xxi	
Item for boat hyre to the Cort for Mr Honinge after our cominge from London	iii	
Item to Mr Lomax for his traveyl to Burye about the same cause	x	
Sum	viii ^{li}	vii ^s vi ^d

If all this was to save the payment of forty shillings to the Royal Household then perhaps the vicar's criticisms of the way in which town affairs were conducted were not entirely unjustified.

Three years after the town had returned its first two MPs to Parliament, another event in its development was its grant, by Letters Patent in 1575, of incorporation.⁽⁹⁾ In this grant, it was stipulated that Eye would for ever remain a free town and borough, that its burgesses would form one corporate body with the powers to plead and be impleaded, to sue, to prosecute and be defended, to answer and be answered 'in all our courts and places'. There would be one common seal and ten of the 'more discreet and reputable men of Eye' (termed principal burgesses) would assist the bailiffs, with the additional help of twenty-four of the 'better inhabitants' (termed the common council).

The first two bailiffs in the new corporation were Thomas Mallows and Robert Clarke and, among those more discreet and reputable men of Eye chosen as the principal burgesses, were Edward Golding, Nicholas Everarde, John Thrower, William Blow, Nicholas Knevet and Robert Shene, many of them the sons of former office-holders in the community.

The bailiffs, burgesses and common council (invariably known as 'the Twelve and Twenty-four') had the power to make and alter laws and

statutes and to govern and regulate artificers and other inhabitants. All courts were to be held at the 'House called Sippewia'. This was the building which had been used as the common hall which in the sixteenth century had generally become known as the Tollhouse. ('Sippewia', sometimes called 'Shipway', may originally have meant 'sheepway'.) The bailiffs were to act as Justices of the Peace and were empowered to hold a Court of Record at Sippewia every Saturday, except at Easter, Whitsun and Christmas. They were to have the use and benefit of all fines, amercements and other profits from the Court of Record as well as the View of Frankpledge (the fee which all freemen over the age of fourteen paid as a surety of their good behaviour). In addition, they were to take all the goods and chattels of felons, fugitives, outlaws and any property found on a thief when captured after a hue and cry.⁽¹⁰⁾

Finally, in 1592, the town achieved the visible sign of its own independent identity with a grant of Arms. The Arms consisted of a cross between four martlets. The martlet is the heraldic form of the swallow and indicated a fourth son: the first three could be provided for but the fourth must take to his wings and fly from the family nest to find an inheritance. This is clearly a symbol of Eye's pride in its independence. Above the cross, a silver eagle with a golden crown and outstretched wings is perched on two sprays of white roses. The crest is an imperial crown, above which is a golden start charged with an eye, a pun on the name of the town. In the grant of Arms, the significance of this crest is explained as:

Issuing from the crown of the imperial sun, shining with gold and gems the Star of Innocence furnished with the all seeing eye of Jehovah. (11)

The ghost of Richard Thurkettle may not have considered the Star of Innocence a suitable symbol for Eye.

It is clear that sixteenth-century Eye, through a series of documents - the Charter, the Constitution, the grant of Incorporation and finally the grant of Arms - strove continually to extend its rights and privileges in its search for greater autonomy. The Reformation processes weakened the power of the church enabling the town to take full advantage of the Protestant settlement and continue its thrust towards independence and self-government. One of the consequences of all this was a new bureaucracy and it became necessary to utilise a whole army of local officials to carry through the responsibilities the town had taken on board.

Those at the top of this hierarchy were the two bailiffs, whose appointment lasted for one year. They were chosen on the Saturday before Michaelmas - on the same occasion as the Twelve and Twenty-four were elected. They had a whole variety of duties, including the execution of justice; the execution of statutes; the quarterly proclamation against unlawful games; responsibility for weights and measures; the watch; the punishment of beggars; the monthly review of the aged, impotent or lame persons within the borough boundary and restricting those who had to beg openly; keeping the petty sessions; nominating collectors of poor relief; ensuring the provision of pillory and cucking stool; controlling the brewhouses and the victuallers, and preserving the liberties of the Fairs. After their year of office was over, they were expected to act as coroners for one year.

The 1566 Constitution made several explicit references to corruption in office and imposed stiff penalties for negligence on the part of bailiffs or any other official. Despite such safeguards, at least one incidence of corruption by bailiffs is recorded in the borough archives. This was during the term of office, towards the end of the century, of William Terold and Thomas Parker.⁽¹²⁾ One of the

accusations against them was that they had allowed themselves to be bribed by three victuallers - Robert Marriot, Edward Balles and George Underwoode - who did not possess the necessary licences for their trade. The bailiffs turned a blind eye to this, accepted about sixty shillings from them, allowed two of them to continue trading and the third actually 'to erect & sett up a newe ynne'.

A more serious charge concerned the sum of £20 which had been put aside as a stock for the poor (an amount taken originally from Edward Golding's cousin, John Harvey, as a fine for his refusal to accept the position of bailiff). William Terold and Thomas Parker held onto this money 'so as the poore have no benefyte thereof'. William Terold, in fact, was already well known for his evasion of the poor rate and other similar charges and is described in one of the town books as 'A man backward in all such doinges'.

All which we were content as matters of no great value
althoughe in tyme manie small somes grewe to a great some
to forbeare & not complaine of for quyet sake.

A further and even more serious charge arose directly from the war in Ireland. As bailiff, Terold had received a warrant from Sir Nicholas Bacon for the collection of £6 10s towards the arming and fitting out of 200 men. Seeing yet another opportunity for personal gain, Terold used this as a pretext for issuing further warrants himself and he informed the four constables that the town had been charged with raising an additional £15 10s. Terold had instructed the constables as follows:

And for that upon conference had with some of our
companye It appereth that theis late musters hath bredd
a greater charge unto us than the sayd £6 10s: we have
thought good for the defraye of thone & thother: by &
with the advyse & consent of so many of our company as
we could intreat to be present & acquaynted with this
service, to impose upon the persons thereunder named the
somes of monie sett downe upon them: which we in hir
Mates name doe wyll & Comand you the Constables etc. to
Leavye & collect with all speade possyble ...

Comments in the margin of the bailiffs' book maintains that no such conference ever took place and that the so-called 'consent' Terold

had received was

a pryvate consent & if any were: only of his picked
choise not publiq.

The following August, Terold and Parker said they had received a new
warrant for the levying of a further £23

And thereupon imposed more grievous rates upon
thinhabitantes than ever before.

Once again the constables were instructed to raise the money, but the
two bailiffs

synce that tyme never yet would shewe the said
pretended warrant.

These abuses only came to light because John Reve complained to
Sir Nicholas Bacon that he was being overcharged. The bailiffs were
bound over at the next Assize at Bury where the Lord Chief Justice of
England ordered them to repay the surpluses they had levied. But
apparently they would not or could not make these repayments and they
appeared again at the Bury Assize the following Lent

where the sayd Turrold upon his Oathe taken in the open
Assises ... most falsely aunswered that he never had
receyved nor medled or had to doe with any of the sayd
somes of monie.

Finally, it was proved 'upon the oathe of the sayd Parker' that Terold
had in fact received certain sums of money

And so in the open & publiq Audience of all that were
present then & there, the sayd Turrold did most
wyttlingly & wyfully forswear himself.

Not surprisingly, Terold appears never to have held office again in
Eye, although Parker, who was slightly less culpable, became bailiff
again eight years later.

The office of bailiff carried the highest possible prestige in
the community and an analysis of those holding this honour shows that
the majority of them were of the highest social status locally. Of
seventeen bailiffs whose status or occupation is known, four were
gentlemen, six were yeomen, one a farmer, two tailors, three drapers
and one a tanner. The status of all office-holders was acknowledged

in many ways, not least of all in the church where the bailiffs and the ten 'Principall Burgesses' were given special seats preserved for them alone ('and no other Inhabitant to sitt therin'). (13)

The person holding the office of steward (or recorder or town clerk as it was variously called) received an annual fee of £1 and was chosen by the Twelve. In addition to the administering of oaths, he was to keep records of the accounts and of the courts of the borough, and he was to enquire at the quarterly General Court whether any person had broken the rules of the constitution. The meagreness of his fee was specially noted in the 1566 constitution and later it was increased to forty shillings. In 1576 the office was granted for life to John Ashfield, described as a gentleman and a fellow of the Middle Temple, but his appointment only lasted a few years and he was replaced in 1581 by Robert Golding, the brother of Edward. Robert (who by this time had moved to Bury St Edmunds) was designated 'esquire' and he also was to hold the office for life. (14)

The chamberlains of the town were elected from the twenty-four common councillors and, like the bailiffs, their duties were many and various. Their accounts were to be presented annually and, if any false dealings were discovered, they were to be punished by the bailiffs. (In order to encourage reports of corruption, their accusers were to be rewarded with a year's free grazing rights on the moor for a horse or a cow.)

The chamberlains' accounts (which at Eye date from 1518) include responsibility for collecting the rents from those freemen allowed to graze their cattle on the moor, and repairs and general oversight of various parts of the town - including ditching, draining, paling and hedging the moor, mending bridges, the cross, the clock, the cucking-stool, the butts, the prison and the tollhouse. (The tollhouse, in fact, was in a state of constant ^{as} repair and is mentioned almost every

year in the accounts: for new keys and locks, whitewashing, tiling, mending the stairs and for general cleaning and decoration.) The chamberlains also collected money for the musters, paid for the food and drink of municipal workers and for men on the watch, organised hospitality at the annual election of officers, arranged the visits of eminent guests, provided drink for the actors at the Corpus Christi play, organised the weights and measures for the market, and were responsible for paying the vicar the tithes of the moorland - which many of them conveniently forgot to do.

Failure to carry out their duties properly led to frequent fines, as in the case of John Harvey and Wylliam Burman who were charged threepence

for that they did nott repayre the Comon hall whiche ys in decaye for want tylinge ... (15)

In fact, John Harvey (who was Edward Golding's cousin) does not seem to have been entirely successful in office for he was also fined for neglect when he was churchwarden. He and his co-churchwarden, Humphrey Knevet, were accused of not repairing the house in which Mother Chorrald lived (presumably a municipal almshouse) and also for neglecting to mend the town stocks.⁽¹⁶⁾ Early in the next century, the churchwardens were actually excommunicated for neglect and had to travel to Bury to pay ten shillings for their discharge.⁽¹⁷⁾

Churchwardens also had a variety of duties, including the collection of fines for non-attendance at church and a monthly compilation of all those non-attenders who refused to pay their 12d fine.⁽¹⁸⁾ They were frequently asked by testators to undertake certain transactions on their behalf - like the collection of rents from land and the distribution of money to the poor - and later in Elizabeth's reign they became responsible for organising official poor relief.

It has been felt by some historians that the office of churchwarden was an unpopular one and that its occupants were men of

little or no social standing. In some parishes they were controlled by the local gentry and dare not step out of line. In Prescott, Lancashire, for example, nomination of churchwardens was in the hands of a Catholic-dominated gentry, which meant that they did not report non-attenders to the ecclesiastical authorities.⁽¹⁹⁾ This state of affairs continued until a group of local Puritans drew up a petition stating that the churchwardens were chosen by the gentlemen of the town without the consent of the pastor and that they were

of the meanest and lewdest sort of the people, and therefore most fit to serve the humour of the gentry and multitude.

In Eye, following the 1566 constitution when the vicar's voice was discounted, responsibility for selecting the churchwardens became the sole prerogative of the borough councillors who, far from choosing 'the meanest and lewdest sort of people', invariably chose men of the highest standing. This practice, and the assumptions behind it, is confirmed by some of the scribbled notes of Edward Golding who, describing a man called Thomas Pratty who lived in the town in the previous century, wrote that he was

of so good credite that he was churchwardeyn.⁽²⁰⁾

And as if to emphasise the point still further, he added that Thomas Pratty was

by all liklyhoode a man of good welth & credite ... a man of good and full yeris & credite & habilitie.

If these were the qualities expected from an Eye churchwarden, then the picture here is spectacularly different from elsewhere. And a brief run-down of the careers of Eye churchwardens more than confirms this impression.

The earliest recorded holders of the office were those substantial citizens Robert Anyell and John Fiske in 1470: these were the town's most eminent benefactors. Most of the sixteenth-century churchwardens also held office as bailiffs and chamberlains and, with

the same names appearing time and again in church and borough records, a clear picture emerges of this one small borough dominated by an oligarchy of leading families, people who were apparently willing to take any office available in the power structure. All the known churchwardens of 1519 and 1525, with the exception of one, were listed in the 1524 subsidy return as holding land or goods.⁽²¹⁾ Of the fifteen recorded churchwardens holding office between 1519 and 1549, at least nine are known to have been bailiffs or chamberlains, while in the late 1550s Thomas London had the astonishing distinction of being constable, chamberlain, churchwarden and bailiff (twice) all in a period of three years.

As the century wore on, the calibre of churchwardens actually rose even further. In 1569, for example, the four churchwardens were Edward Golding and Nicholas Everard - both gentlemen - Richard Fulcher, a yeoman, and Nicholas Knevet, a draper. (Nicholas Knevet was also bailiff in the same year.) All four men are recorded as owning land or goods in the 1568 subsidy list.⁽²²⁾

As self-government increased, that Eye oligarchy held jurisdiction over practically every area of town life. The bailiffs controlled all planning and a licence had to be acquired from them before any additions could be made to a house or building. Edward Richards, a tanner, sought permission from them to add a porch onto his house in Church Street, Roger Stone to set up posts and rails outside his house in Castle Street, and Thomas Browne to do the same outside his house.⁽²³⁾

The grant of Incorporation also allowed the bailiffs to take all the goods and chattels of a felon, and little could they have known that one of their first acts, under this condition, would be to seize the goods of their vicar, John Hewar, after his successful suicide attempt. The gaol was another responsibility and included the appointment of a gaoler.⁽²⁴⁾ The bailiffs also controlled the

market and their permission was needed for the conversion of market stalls into more permanent shops.⁽²⁵⁾ They also regulated the amount of space allowed, and William Miller was one man who was fined for 'setting his blocke too farr into the Streete in the Markett place'.⁽²⁶⁾

Responsibility for keeping the streets free from obstruction, as well as for keeping them clean, rested with the Leet Court of the Honour. (The growth of bureaucracy consequent upon the increasing autonomy of the borough led to a bewildering array of administrative procedures, and this is evident in the upkeep of the highways.) Before the Reformation, individual inhabitants had felt themselves responsible for the roads, while the chamberlains ensured the upkeep and repair of the bridges. It is significant that bequests in wills for the repair of roads fell off after the 1540s and this may well have reflected the feeling (as was later to be the case with the poor law) that, since responsibility for the roads now devolved upon the borough, the previous sense of sharing and communality was no longer appropriate. The 'mending of foul ways' or the repair of certain stretches of highway had been a fairly regular feature of wills: there were four such bequests in the thirties and five in the forties, but they virtually ceased after that and only one similar provision occurred again during the entire century.

As for the Leet Court, it was kept fairly busy with a continuing supply of cases involving interference with the passage of traffic. Henry Vaux was fined threepence for 'continueing a Muckehill in the Backe Lane', as was Henry Clerke who had 'made a muckhill in the streete to the Comon Annoyance of the queenes liedge people'. Thomas Todd was charged with 'annoyeing the streets with his hoggs' and two men were fined eightpence 'for layenge of Tymbre att thende of the mootehall in the hyewey there'. Roger Greye was fined sixpence because 'he annoyeth the streete ... with the thache of his house' and Thomas Cutler because of the 'filthe and myer' he

shovelled into Church Street. He was not the only one, for Nicholas Barker also 'annoyethe the strete of this towne with the donge and filth of his stable'.⁽²⁷⁾

Such obstructions, however, were not the only problem and the roads were by no means free from accidents, as a document from another Suffolk town records.⁽²⁸⁾ It states that

divers persons, having and using carts and tumbrils in this town, do drive their said carts out of the ordinary and usual waies in the high street of this town, and many times near to the doors of the houses, running and driving their said carts and tumbrils swiftly and speedily within the same, not only to the common annoyance, but also to the great peril and danger of young children sitting, or going, in the same streets.

Whether speed or dangerous driving was the cause is not clear, but at least one fatal accident in the streets of Eye was recorded at the inquest on Henry Debynham.⁽²⁹⁾ The coroners reported that

the seyd Henry Debynham the seyd day & yere above seyd about vii of the Clok & viii of the same day in the forenone at Eye afore seyd the seyd drying (presumably 'driving') the Cart w^t one John Holland of Thelvetham his master stombled and so be mysfortune Fell to the Grounde undre the Ryght Whele of the seyd Cart and so be mysse fortune drove over the hedde of the seyd Henry Debynham and so the seyd Herry than & there wasse slayn and so the seyd Jure seyn be there othes that the seyd Cart whele whasse the occacion of his Dethe

and they noted diligently that the cart wheel was worth 6s 8d.

Perhaps it was a little too early in the day for liquor to have been responsible, but that was another area of daily life that the bailiffs attempted to control. They granted the licences to local brewers and victuallers who were charged

to keepe thereby of good ale and beere, victuall at reasonable prices, no unlawfull games to be played, nor harbor or lodge or kepe any judged vagabonde, ydell, or suspected persons. ⁽³⁰⁾

The bailiffs clearly took seriously their duties as moral arbiters and it was even laid down in the constitution that no-one was allowed to swear at them. But whatever their private views on illegitimacy, it was the practical aspects of this social problem which most

concerned them, and they issued several 'bastardy bonds' exonerating the town from any future responsibility for the child in question.⁽³¹⁾ John Field was bound in the sum of £5 for 'saving the towne harmeles for keping Margery Awsten' and the 'woman childe borne oute of matrymony' of Anne Rushe was to be kept solely by the reputed father, the tailor John Knevet, who agreed to

kepe & maynteyne & bringe upp the said childe with meate drincke clothes & other necessaries so as the said childe doe neyther begg within the said towne nor the inhabitants of the said towne be any wayes charged by lawe for the fyndeing & kepeinge the said childe ...

A recurring item in the borough records concerns the various demands made by the government for military support, the mustering and training of soldiers and the provision of equipment. During Elizabeth's reign, such warrants usually came from Sir Nicholas Bacon at nearby Redgrave. In 1596, as its share of the county store, Eye was instructed to provide half a barrel of powder and fifteen pounds of matches to have in readiness as and when it might be required. A year or two later, the town was ordered to supply two soldiers who were to be 'able & sufficient men' not of the 'baser sort, nor impotent, nor vagarant, nor ydle persons'.⁽³²⁾ All this was for the war with Ireland and several levies had to be raised by the town at this period, but on the whole it was a breakdown in order closer to home that most concerned the authorities and one of their recurring anxieties was the playing of 'unlawful games'. There are several cases of offenders being punished for this. It was reported of Margery Rogers, for instance, that she 'suffereth unlawful games to be playde in hir howse', and Adam Qynton, a tailor, was accused for that he for his owne private luker dothe keepe and mayntayne one Bowling Ally within this town and burroghe contrary to the statute. ⁽³³⁾

This was not the first time that the Qyntons had faced such charges. Some years earlier, Robert Qynton had been accused of supporting and

maintaining unlawful games, with five other people (including two widows) named at the same time. But the same court also dealt with more minor offences - as when thirteen men were fined for not wearing their caps on Sundays 'according to the statute'.⁽³⁴⁾

More serious matters included cases of assault: Thomas Elvyn and Henry Ellyett were accused of assaulting Thomas Browne, the carpenter, and Nycholas Roskett attacked Wylliam Goldwyn '& uppon hym drewe blude'.⁽³⁵⁾ It was not long after this that Nycholas Roskett was in trouble again; this time the scandal centred on his wife Pleasance and her relationship with a local labourer, Robert Thurkettle.⁽³⁶⁾ (Indeed, perhaps the two incidents are not unrelated for it is quite possible that Nycholas may have been provoked by Wylliam Goldwyn on the subject of his wife.) Nycholas Roskett was a cordwainer; he had married Pleasance Baldwyn in 1571 and now, twenty years later, she was ordered to appear before the bailiffs charged with being a disturber of the peace. The outgoing bailiffs met with the two new bailiffs and the principal burgesses at the Common Hall to discuss the matter. George Peachell, the vicar, was also there, and he told the assembled gathering that Robert Thurkettle (who had died two years earlier) had confessed to him the day before he died that the deeds of his house were in the hands of Pleasance Roskett. He had apparently been infatuated with her and he told the vicar that

he had divers tymes demanded it but she would not delyver it, and he desyred that he wolde be his frende to make another deed, and further did aske forgiveness of his wyfe for that he had many tymes deryded her by gytting of money and other things from her to give unto the sayd Roskett wife.

Thomas Russhe, a yeoman, had also been present at Robert Thurkettle's confession

and understanding that the said Thurkettle had delyvered the dede of his howse unto Roskett's wife did aske what he ment for to doe, and the said Thurkettle thereupon did confesse that he had bene wrongfully in love with Roskette wyfe then wist he then he ought to have done

and did aske God forgyvneness. And further that he had boughte a clothe of graye russet and did gyve it to the said Roskett wyfe. And that his wyfe knowing thereof did take it away from her. And that the said Thurkettle confessed further that he did love the very steppes where the said Rosketts wyfe did tread. And he did besече God to forgyve him that synn and all others.

At this point in the documentary record, the paper is badly mutilated and it is impossible to tell just what Pleasance Roskett's fate was, but perhaps it might be inferred from the original summons which states that the bailiffs

maye have her bodie before them to inflict such bodilie punishment as by the law is provyded for such.

Whether that 'bodilie punishment' meant the cucking-stool we cannot know: that was certainly the appointed lot of common scolds, of whom 'Lewcockes wief' was one. However, this particular case rebounded rather badly on the plaintiff, Robert Mason, who had apparently presented Mistress Lewcocke to the wrong court as a 'Comon scolde', and such was the fury of the bailiffs (jealous of their own areas of jurisdiction) that they disenfranchised him as a Freeman of the town. Robert Mason, they said (who, as a Freeman, was sworn to the maintenance of the liberties of the town)

to the great prejudice of the same liberties, to the evill example of others, & to satisfye his great malice rather then upon Conscience

was no longer worthy to be a Freeman. (37)

These were the petty scandals of the town which made up daily life. More serious was the plight of the poor. As the century progressed, the borough came to take on more and more responsibility for them, partly through the decline in individual charity and partly as a result of the various Elizabethan poor laws.

The Hospital of St Mary Magdalene, a brick and timber building just by Lambseth Bridge, was the local house for the sick poor and earlier in the century it had been secularised and taken over by the municipal authorities. (38) Once it had featured regularly in local

wills, especially in those of the late-mediaeval period, but bequests to the 'spital' fell off during the sixteenth century and after John Mason's gift of fourpence in 1529 there were to be no further bequests to it for almost thirty years. Whereas gifts to the ordinary poor of the town continued in much the same proportion throughout the century (i.e. in about fifty per cent of wills), references to Magdalene become very rare. It may be that the takeover by the borough resulted in a compulsory assessing of a local poor rate which lessened the people's inclination to support it voluntarily. (This had happened at Cratfield when, in the fifties, an attempt to make a public collection for the poor had been introduced. Two 'hable personnes' were chosen as 'gatherers for the poor' and they were directed to 'gently ask and demand' of every man and woman at church what they of their charity would be contented to give weekly towards relief of the poor, and to write the amount in a register.)⁽³⁹⁾

It is also possible that Magdalene (which had almost certainly had a religious foundation) had become associated in the minds of local people with spiritual practices and, as the doctrine of purgatory lost much of its power, so too Magdalene lost much of its revenues. This possibility would be supported by the fact that, after 1529, the Hospital was only mentioned in two further wills and both of these were written during the resurgence of Catholicism under Queen Mary. One of these was Nycholas Rayner who, in 1558, left twelve pence to the poor of Magdalene and to the 'porest Lazar & syck man' there his 'payre of course Shetes'. Nycholas Rayner seems to have been especially concerned with the plight of the sick poor, for he left sixpence to each of the six 'laser howses' of Norwich, and the chantry implications of his bequests are confirmed in one particular gift of fourpence to a Norwich 'Spittle howse' which was given for the specific intention of praying for the soul of Annes Barne. He also remembered local poor living in the community of Eye and left to

Father Aldrede his 'fustyan Jerkin' and to old Father Tooke his 'Russet Jerkin'.

Responsibility for the day-to-day running of Magdalene was in the hands of a warden specially selected by the bailiffs. William Benet was probably an early holder of this particular office, for regular references to 'Benet of Magdalene' occur in the chamberlains' accounts from 1539 onwards. A later warden was George Lambert, who remained in the post for forty years until his death in 1600. In addition to looking after the Hospital and its lands, he was responsible for the

safe keypyng and mayntenynge of all suche poore sicke lame and diseased as from tyme to tyme shall happen in the sayd town to be diseased with leprosy or any other fowle contagious diseases and sicknesses. (40)

He was succeeded by Paul Stevenson, a husbandman of Eye, whose instructions were almost identical but included the addition of people with 'imbecilites' and all those 'as shalbe decrepite aged & decayed persons'. It was the bailiffs who decided which people could enter Magdalene and Paul Stevenson undertook not to accept anyone without their consent.

Poverty was becoming a serious problem for the borough, as was made apparent in the 1566 constitution which referred to

the great Number of the Poor now inhabiting & hereafter like to Inhabit this poor Burgh & Town. (41)

For this reason, additional provisions had to be made for this one institution was no longer adequate. Almshouses began to appear and the same constitution states that the bailiffs and churchwardens shall have the placing of poor people in these municipal houses. In fact, the constitution carries many indirect references to the poor which reflects the borough's increasing responsibility in this area. Mainly these references concern the fines for numerous offences which were to be placed in the poor man's box. If victuallers, for example, acquired beer from outside the town ('of a Foreigner'), then

they would forfeit fourpence a month for every dozen firkins bought.

This money would go

for & towards the Relief of the s^d poor who by such underly buying of their Beer of Foreigners are much more hindred then they shall be Benefitted by the s^d 4d to be paid in form afsd.

This order, it was protested, was intended for the relief of the large numbers of poor now living in the town, rather than for reasons of protectionism. Similar rules applied to the market: anyone selling grain, fruit or victualls at any other market must also offer the same goods for sale at Eye market, under pain of a twenty shillings fine which would also be passed on to the poor. Those householders refusing to pay their assessed rates towards the wages of the clerk and sexton would pay 3s 4d; negligent bailiffs would be fined ten shillings; freemen absent from the town for more than a year without permission would forfeit 1s 8d. Failure by a majority of the Twelve and Twenty-four to attend, say, the annual audit of churchwardens' accounts would result in each person who did attend having to give money to the poor man's box. This was indeed social pressure of the most subtle kind and it seems that the poor stood to gain in direct proportion to the breakdown of order and duty in the town.

The bailiffs also had the power to punish idle and counterfeit beggars as well as the 'Relievers of them wch deceive the Poor of their Alms' and had to review monthly 'what Aged Impotent or lame persons' they had within the borough boundaries.⁽⁴²⁾ Before the Reformation, it had been the churchwardens who were largely entrusted with dealing with the poor (mainly as a result of individual legacies) but as the borough encroached more and more on these areas of town life the power of the churchwardens diminished until they were only allowed to act under the authority of the bailiffs. Their accounts of the following century reveal many transactions concerning the poor: payments to poor widows when they buried their husbands (sums of money in the region of twenty pence or two shillings);

alms of various kinds, including two shillings to a lame soldier; twelvecence to a widow when her children were sick; and many instances where clothes were provided - hats, stockings, shoes, shirts and, on one occasion, a suit.⁽⁴³⁾ Other services to the poor included carting wood to a widow's house, thatching another widow's roof, providing sheets, and carrying out many repairs to Magdalene - to the walls, the chimneys and the thatch. It even seems that in some cases the borough accepted responsibility for the payment of poor people's rents: ten shillings was paid 'for ould Meenes halfe yeres rent' and later 5s 6d for 'ould Meenes rent'. Old Meene, in fact, received a number of payments from the borough - one shilling for removing his wood and two shillings 'by Mr. bayliffs appointment'. In one year alone, the amount of money spent by the borough on behalf of this one poor man amounted to twenty-one shillings.⁽⁴⁴⁾

As the borough increasingly extended its jurisdiction over those areas formerly belonging to the church, confusion not unnaturally arose and the consequent blurring of authority left room for certain opportunists to turn the situation to their own advantage. We have already seen how William Thrower took it upon himself to sell off the goods belonging to Magdalen Chapel and how he acquired a piece of land whose revenues should have been paid to the poor but were not.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Then there was John Gislingham who similarly acquired a piece of land whose revenues should have gone to the poor; in his case, he did actually make the distribution but many people felt the money was not reaching those who truly deserved it.⁽⁴⁶⁾

As the century wore on, areas of authority and responsibility were gradually clarified leaving less room for deliberate or genuine confusion. Even so, mistakes did occur. John Whetingham, for example, left twenty marks in 1564 to buy 'twenty younge kynne' which the bailiffs and churchwardens were supposed to let out at sixteen pence per animal with the amount raised being passed on to the poor.

The twenty marks to acquire the cattle did not reach the bailiffs for a further six years, and even then John Whetingham's widow only paid half the stipulated amount. Three years later, the final instalment was paid (nine years after the original bequest) and the cattle were finally acquired. This investment yielded an annual payment of 26s 8d to the local poor and continued regularly for about thirteen years when, in 1586, it suddenly stopped. Humphrey Knevet, who was one of the churchwardens at this time, was instantly suspected by the borough official who remarked in one of the town books

for what cause he payd it not perhapps he knowes
and added

It is to be inquyred what became of those neat.⁽⁴⁷⁾

Another legacy which went astray was the £10 given by J. Busby (probably John Busby) in 1581 to provide annual gifts of ten shillings to the poor. The churchwardens experienced some difficulty in securing this money from his executors but in 1584 one of them 'put the band in sewt' against Richard Rogers and recovered the £10, which

since that time hathe ... bene for the most part
bestowed on the poore; but specially upon Eliz Dyrrick.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Here is a rather sad irony, for Elizabeth Derrick was, in fact, the niece of John Busby who gave the original sum. (He was the brother of her mother, Anne Bettes.) Elizabeth had clearly come from one of the better off families in Eye and when her mother made her will in 1569 Elizabeth and her husband Richard were given land in Polstead. Their daughter Anne was to be paid £10 from the revenues of this land when she reached the age of fourteen. A further condition of the gift was that twenty pence should be paid yearly for six years to the poor of Polstead. (Elizabeth's other gifts included six silver spoons, one silver goblet, her mother's best gown, a petticoat of scarlet cloth, her mother's best kirtle and two pairs of sheets. Her daughter Anne was also given her grandmother's 'owlde worstede gowne'.)

Anne Bettles also left £5 to the poor of Eye to be distributed on her burial day and 3s 4d to be paid annually to those poor attending the church on Fridays. Little could she have thought that some thirty years later her own daughter would be among those local poor entirely dependent upon gifts, charity or the poor rates. Elizabeth Derrick's was a spectacular fall from landowner to total poverty and her name occurs regularly in the town records of the nineties as being in receipt of twelve pence a month.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Whatever the reason for this disastrous decline in status and condition - whether illness, madness, poor management or sheer misfortune - it is fairly evident that none of her many relations in Eye (the Busbies or the Bettles - she had three brothers, for instance) was inclined to support her.

It was the job of the collectors of the poor to raise money from those who could afford it and to redistribute it among the needy. In 1593 they managed to collect 45s from the bailiffs and principal burgesses, 44s from the 'common burgesses', 61s from gentlemen and 16s from 'the Comon Sorte'.⁽⁵⁰⁾ (The hierarchy listed here clearly puts borough officials before gentlemen indicating not only the primacy of the borough but also that, in some senses, the existence of the new secular authority might threaten the traditional class divisions in the town.) This year's sum of £8 6s was given out in amounts ranging from 8d a month (to Mother Holderness and Elizabeth Bowler, a widow) to 2s 8d a month to Doll Deynes. A penny was spent on a purse in which to collect the money and the total payments came to £5 16s 1d. Doll Deynes was evidently incapacitated; she was an inmate of Magdalene and the money was always paid on her behalf to the warden, until in 1596 when the parish register records the burial of 'Doll Danes a pore woman of Maudlin'.⁽⁵¹⁾

In 1578, a shed was made at Magdalene and straw provided for it, which may have been a precaution taken in housing someone with a

highly contagious disease.⁽⁵²⁾ For in that same year, Mother Skete was taken to the Hospital in a boat - to a chamber which had been specially prepared for her - and the rather extraordinary method of her removal might indicate that she was in some sense a danger to the community.⁽⁵³⁾ Certainly such poor and overcrowded communities were exceptionally vulnerable to the spread of disease. Earlier in the century the town had been struck by the deadly sweating sickness and in 1586 it suffered again from a very high mortality. Among those who died was one of the Lamberts, who may well have been a relation of the warden of Magdalene and therefore particularly susceptible to infection. But most of the victims that year were children; they included the son and daughter of Thomas Gissing; John and Alice, the children of Thomas Browne the carpenter; John, Dorotheie, Samuel and George, the children of William Langley; and, in less than a month, the four children of Thomas Balles - Nicholas, Mary, John and Margaret - followed only eleven days later, just before Christmas, by the death of their father as well.

Since the church's practical role in such disasters had been almost completely replaced by the secular authorities, it says something about the appalling predicament Eye found itself in that year that, for the first time for many years, the bailiffs actually called upon the help of the vicar to try and ease the situation. They gave him a grant of ten shillings

to bestowe in relief of the poore infected with the plague.⁽⁵⁴⁾ But for the most part it was the borough who now dealt with such problems and when the corrupt bailiffs, William Terold and Thomas Parker, embezzled the £20 which had been set aside as a stock for the poor, this meant that the poor were not

sett on worke, according to the godly intent & true meaning of the statute but manie of them by reason thereof & for want of stock to sett them on worke

withall, are dryven eyther to lyve in ydlenes & in great extreamytie, or elles to runne begging from doore to doore to keepe them from starvinge: & some of very necessitie forced for their relief & sustenance to fylche & steale. (55)

This graphic and indignantly compassionate picture of the poor is further illustrated in the parish register where the sad repetitive litany of their names records their sole obscure memorial. People like 'Emme pore woman of Mawdlen', 'Jaffrey pore man at Mawdlen', 'George Bunsted a pore boy at Mawdlen', 'Alice Felix a pore innocent at Mawdlen', 'little Tom of Mawdlen', 'Doll Danes a pore woman of Maudlin'. Then there were those not living in the Hospital, like 'Robert Barker pore man', 'Marian Prattye a pore widow', 'pore Robin Strut', 'William Hunt an old Blind man'. Others were travellers on the road, pedlars or vagrants who died unknown and uncared for in an alien place, like 'Richard Snelling a stranger & pedlar' or 'Alice Hawke, a pedlinge woman'. Some did not even have a name: the burial 'of a stranger' is recorded, 'a pore man at Mawdlyn', 'an old man that was found dead in the Castle Yard', 'a stranger whose name we knowe not', 'a pore man that died in the market Place' and, unhappiest of all these pitiful entries, 'a pore dombe man that came to the towne no man knoweth how or from whence that dyed at Mawdlin'. (56)

Such stark entries reflect an even starker reality. The overwhelming majority of deaths recorded specifically of 'poor' men, women or children occurred in the winter months. That raw East Anglian climate, the unsheltered environment and the damp chill of the town all took their toll of bodies too frail or too malnourished to withstand such harshness. Richard Thurkettle, Sir Thomas Cornwallis, as well as recurring references in the town documents, all signified the extent of poverty in Eye, and when Francis Kent, a Norfolk gentleman, left £100 to the poor to be divided among seven local towns, he allocated by far the largest portion to Eye, believing presumably that here was the greatest need. (57)

REFERENCES: CHAPTER 9

1. J. C. Jeaffreson, The Manuscripts of the Corporation of Eye in the County of Suffolk, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Rep. X, 515
It is thought that the clerks of the royal chancery may have been confused by the name 'Heya' which could stand equally for Eye or for the town of Hythe in Kent.
2. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f20v
3. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f21
4. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, 1596 Accounts
5. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/B/10/2c
Historical Manuscripts Commission, Salisbury MSS (Hatfield House) Part 2 (1888) 542
6. J. H. Busby, Parliamentary History of Eye, unpublished typescript, SRO Ipswich
In 1572 the town's two MPs were Charles Cutler and Richard Beddall. Charles Cutler was the son of Nicholas Cutler of Stayer House and in fact most of the early MPs were local men. Thomas Bedingfield of Gisligham was returned in 1586, Edward Grimston of Rishangles and Edmund Bacon (third son of Lord Keeper Bacon of Redgrave) in 1588. The Honings family, who owned the Manor of Eye Priory, produced two MPs in the 1590s: Edward and John.
7. J. H. Busby, op cit
8. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, 1596 Accounts
9. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/B/2
10. East Anglian Miscellany, Vol 5 (1911) 95, No. 3505 & 119, No. 3551
11. East Anglian Magazine, Vol 8 (1948-9) 217
12. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, unnumbered pages, see entries for 1599
13. J. C. Jeaffreson, op cit, 534-5. This order, dated 1650, confirmed an earlier practice.
14. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/2, unnumbered pages (see first and fifth sheet)
15. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/3/13
16. ibid
17. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/Q1/2, Churchwardens' Accounts 1618-19. They were excommunicated for 'not makeinge of doores for the porches which the Townmen thought nedles'. The penalty of excommunication was not unusual in cases of gross neglect, although it seems mainly to have been exercised against churchwardens. See: J. Charles Cox, Churchwardens' Accounts (London, 1913) 12

18. W. P. M. Kennedy, Parish Life under Queen Elizabeth (London, 1914) 123-4
19. Christopher Haigh, Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire (Cambridge, 1975) 18
20. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, f24v
21. Suffolk in 1524, being the Return for a Subsidy granted in 1523, Suffolk Green Books, X (Woodbridge, 1910) 167. Nicholas Shene held goods to the value of £10, Thomas Mason held lands worth £4, Thomas Parmenter lands of £3 6s 8d, and Thomas Barker, Roger Vere and George Hamond goods to the value of £2, £4 and £10 respectively.
22. Suffolk in 1568, being the Return for a Subsidy granted in 1566, Suffolk Green Books, XII (Bury St Edmunds, 1909) 135
23. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/5/31, EE2/M1/5/32 and EE2/M1/5/35. (These examples come from the seventeenth century.)
24. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/2, unnumbered pages (see fourth page)
In 1581 the bailiffs appointed William Jervys, who was described as a gentleman, as gaoler. The conditions of his patent for the office were that he would keep safely in the gaol

all & singler persounes whiche are to be taken & arrested within the said towne & burghe which accordinge to the lawes and Customes of the realme of England shalbe or ought to be imprysoned and to his Custody or kepinge in the sayd pryson or Gaile shall be comytted untill the said Prysoners so comitted shall from thence according to the Lawes of England be delivered ...

It is not clear just where the gaol was situated, but early in the next century John Culham granted to the town a piece of land near the Tollhouse for use as a gaol (on the north side of the way leading from Eye market to Church Street). SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/5/2 & EE2/M1/6/7
25. Elfrida Leaf, The History of Eye, Suffolk, 1066-1603, unpublished typescript, SRO Ipswich, Chapter 5, 20
26. Exhibition of Eye documents held in Eye 1977 organised by SRO Ipswich
27. ibid (Proceedings of the Leet Court of the Honour of Eye) SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/3/13
Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 21
28. R. A. Roberts, The Borough Business of a Suffolk Town (Orford) 1559-1660, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th series, Vol 14 (1931)
29. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/H/1, Inquisition on Henry Debynhem, 21st June 1525

30. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 20
31. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/2, pages
unnumbered (see sixth page)
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/9/31, Bond of
indemnity for maintenance of a bastard child, 1610
32. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1, see entries
for 1596 and 1598.
Two pieces of sixteenth-century armour exist in Eye Church:
a Close Helmet dated about 1520 and a Pikeman's Morion of
the time of Elizabeth. This was probably an officer's
helmet, but part of the armour belonging to the Train
Bands. See: Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 15 (1915) 1-2
33. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 20
34. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/3/13
35. ibid
36. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 21-2
37. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/2, unnumbered
pages (see last page of book)
38. Suff. Inst. Arch., Vol 12 (1906) 78
According to Tanner, the borough had taken over Magdalene
round about the time of the dissolution of the monasteries.
(See: Thomas Tanner, Notitia Monastica (1744) 530). The
fact that regular references to the warden, Benet, occur
in the town records from 1539 onwards rather confirms this.
However, it is just possible that Magdalene had been
secularised even earlier. A map of 1534 attached to the
Valor Ecclesiasticus makes no reference to the hospital at
all, suggesting that it was by then no longer a religious
foundation. (See: Valor Ecclesiasticus, Vol 3, Record
Commission (1821).)
39. Cratfield Accounts 84
40. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 22
41. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/B/10/2c
42. ibid
43. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/Q1/2, Churchwardens'
Accounts, 1618-19
44. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/Q1/5, Churchwardens'
Accounts, 1642
45. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/3, ff8, 20, 30
46. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1
47. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/5/27
SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1

48. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1
49. ibid
50. ibid
51. SRO Ipswich, FB 135/D1/1, Parish Register of Eye
52. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1
53. Elfrida Leaf, op cit, Chapter 5, 23
54. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/E/1
55. ibid
56. SRO Ipswich, FB 135/D1/1, Parish Register of Eye
57. SRO Ipswich, Eye Borough Records, EE2/M1/3/1 & 12,
Will of Francis Kent

CONCLUSION

The story of the English Reformation is an extraordinarily involved one and it has many loose ends. The Reformation cannot in any sense be seen as a homogeneous movement for it was a see-saw of different regimes and differing ideologies, complicated still further by considerable variations in emphasis, inconsistencies and individual eccentricities. If it is an exacting task to try and follow the shifting pattern of ideas, the seething cross-currents of such a vast and ill-defined movement, it would be even more of a forlorn quest to attempt to reduce it to a logical textbook theory. Perhaps all we can hope for in this agitated period of history is to look for broad guidelines, and even at the more complex local level it is possible to discern certain strands which are somehow more recognisable than others.

The outstanding feature of pre-Reformation Christendom was its uniformity: a uniformity of belief, practice and even language which bound the people in a common orthodoxy. But in the century preceding the Reformation, certain dissident tendencies began to emerge from within the apparently monolithic structure of the late-mediaeval church. One of the most significant of these was Lollardy, for it was a heresy which anticipated many of the later Protestant attitudes; it is for this reason that its founder, John Wycliffe, has sometimes been called 'the morning-star of the Reformation'.

There is considerable debate about the relationship between native Lollard heresy in the fifteenth century and Protestant heresy in the sixteenth, but the most recent accounts do stress the importance of the former in preparing the ground for the Reformation⁽¹⁾ and evidence from Eye also indicates a strong link between earlier Lollard activity

and later receptivity to Protestantism. The town was particularly outstanding in its number of heretics at the dawn of the Reformation and there was much about these very early Protestants - their craft, their beliefs and their language - which suggests a close relationship with their Lollard ancestry. In the case of this one small community, Lollardy proved to be an exceptionally fertile ground for the subsequent growth.

From the period of the 1530s onwards, however, the picture becomes considerably more confused. Where it was possible in the first three or four decades of the century to pick out individual theological dissidents - men of decided religious opinions clearly discernible against the static background of conformity - from the forties onwards that movement exploded into little less than chaos as many more people began to recognise the opportunities that Protestantism offered. Unlike the early Protestants, these were people not necessarily of strong religious conviction and it becomes impossible to say with any confidence which of Eye's inhabitants were primarily concerned with theological issues or which had joined the bandwagon through expediency. It is beyond the scope of the historian to disentangle motivation (Tudor officials - whatever else they did - did not compile psychological surveys) and it is even more impossible to further classify dissent into its more subtle component parts of Lutheranism, Zwinglianism, Anabaptism or Calvinism. It is unlikely, in fact, that even the participants in this drama could have done so either since the over-riding impression of the middle years of the century at Eye is one of considerable confusion and uncertainty with a jumble of theological notions.

Those of a theologically radical position were probably clear in their minds, as were those of a theologically orthodox position, but between these two minorities fell most of the people of Eye, people who had no particular doctrinal axe to grind and whose bewilderment is

certainly reflected in the wills of the period.

Basing the evidence on the extant wills of Eye (which, however limited a source, is the only one which gives us a more generalised picture of the town) then it seems there was almost complete religious traditionalism until the reign of Edward. The progress of the Henrician Reformation had little effect on orthodox belief through the twenties, thirties and early forties; wills were not only traditional in manner, but the vast majority of them still made reference to Mary. Only one will can be classified as 'Protestant' before Edward's reign and that was Thomas Roser's (a tanner) in 1541. Bequests to the church continued in the orthodox manner and the vast majority of wills during Henry's reign left a gift to the parish church and a donation to the High Altar.

If doubts began to enter the minds of Eye inhabitants during Edward's reign, it was largely hidden in the tendency of most people to opt for the safety of an indeterminate expression of faith, which usually involved leaving their souls simply to 'God Almighty'. A statistical analysis of wills for this period is not significant since, for Edward's reign, there are the fewest extant wills of any period in the century, but of those that do still exist 62% were confused or indeterminate, 25% revealed Catholic sympathies and 12% Protestant. Significantly, bequests to the church fell dramatically and there were none at all during Edward's reign.

The reign of Mary saw a vigorous return to orthodoxy. 57% of testators left something to the church and to the High Altar (although this practice does not seem to have returned until about the last year of her reign) and 76% made a statement of faith in the Catholic style, with a quarter of these making specific reference to Mary. 14% should be classified as indeterminate and 9% as Protestant. While it seems on the surface that Eye had willingly adapted to a restored Catholicism, we should not forget the influence of the scribe, Thomas Rippes, at this

time: in all of the wills that he was involved with (with the notable exception of two convinced Protestants) there is a remarkable similarity of preamble.

For the first year of Elizabeth, wills continued in the solidly traditional Catholic fashion, although the last reference to Mary occurred in 1558. But thereafter, and for several years, the picture is one of confusion with testators incorporating a hotch-potch of old and new theological ideas (as, for example, in believing Christ to be their sole redeemer - and even in some cases referring to the 'elect' - and yet at the same time still leaving bequests for their souls or offering prayers to the 'whole company of heaven')). During the years 1559-1565, about 42% of testators seem confused in their doctrinal beliefs, 25% still clung to the old formulas, 16% showed definite Protestant beliefs and the rest were indeterminate. However, after 1559 there were almost no further bequests to the parish church, the last two being in 1563 and 1567.

The later sixties saw a gradual departure from the older, traditional statements of faith, and from the seventies onwards the new theology seems to have become more or less accepted. Between 1570 and the end of the century, 72% of wills were definitely Protestant in character, while the rest were indeterminate.

Taking the period of the Reformation as a whole, the picture is one of prevailing conservatism until the reign of Edward. A brief unsettled period is then followed by an almost total swing back to Catholicism under Mary. The adaptation to the Church of England under Elizabeth was perhaps slower than might have been expected, and it was not until 1585 that the proportion of 'indeterminate' wills was overtaken by those of a specifically 'Protestant' nature. The periods of greatest confusion seem to have been during Edward's reign and for the first twenty or so years of Elizabeth.

But if there is a hint of lingering conservatism, this should not be mistaken for ardent Catholicism. The backlash of conservatism that tends to accompany any social change was no less apparent in the series of abrupt adjustments the people of sixteenth-century England had to make as the pendulum of faith swung backwards and forwards. However, love of the familiar, a need for the security of an unchanging world, does not necessarily imply fierce doctrinal debate and those who held tenaciously to the old ways should not be confused with recusants or even crypto-Catholics. Religion was intimately caught up with traditional habits and customs and it is impossible to disentangle its threads from these other aspects of sixteenth-century culture. There are, for example, several instances of 'survivalists' who kept up the mediaeval tradition of miracle plays until the 1570s⁽²⁾ but such an activity cannot necessarily be equated with theological devotion; it might be an excuse for a bean-feast or, more simply, because 'we've always done it'. The ill-defined and unformed longings of the people for their familiar past may have had more than a hint of retrospective sentimentalism and such survivalist practices did not necessarily imply clearly-defined theological attitudes. We should not forget that even Queen Elizabeth herself loved many of the old forms of worship.

In the same way, apparently progressive radicalism may also not reflect deeply-held theology, for there was a multitude of people who followed Luther for less spiritual reasons and whose 'Protestantism' stemmed rather from the new aggressive secularism of the age. For, of the many-stranded response to the changes in Europe, without doubt the most clearly observable is the thrust of civic pride which resulted in many borough officials supporting Protestantism as one method of dissipating the stranglehold of the church. The dramatic chronicle of the secular rise and development of the town is matched only by the decline in the power of the church.

This steady erosion of the church's monopoly in the town was, in many ways, more significant and far-reaching for Eye than even the violent changes in theology for it dictated the form of local government for many generations. The transfer of power from the church to lay officials was part of the whole complex process of the Reformation and for this reason it is by no means easy to distinguish the sacred from the secular, but what it meant in reality was the gradual encroachment of the borough on almost every area of town life. The major power struggle in Eye can be seen as not so much that between Catholics and Protestants as between the old ecclesiastical hierarchy and the new town men and, in the struggle, the church eventually lost the role it had held for centuries as the very pivot of society. The new generation of local Tudor lay officials, on which Tudor policy so much depended, found in Lutheranism not so much a liberating theology as a liberating social movement through which to express dissatisfaction with the old order.

One consequence of this was the domination of certain leading families in the borough in whom power was vested - a power which passed through several generations. This oligarchy held sway over virtually every area of town life and they symbolise in a sense the doctrinal divide for they took up with vigour one or other of the theological sides. And it is here that there is just discernible another factor which has a bearing on the sort of 'class' divisions within small communities. In East Anglia as a whole it was generally recognised by contemporaries that the gentry tended to be Catholic while the common people sympathised with Protestantism. This classification is mirrored in the less obvious social sub-divisions within the Eye community and an analysis of the social status of the leading participants reveals a 'class' distinction of gentlemen and yeomen, who were mainly Catholic, and craftsmen (especially those in the cloth industry) who were mainly Protestant.

If we take five of the leading Catholics and five of the leading Protestants, they can be categorised as follows:

Catholics

Richard Thurkettle	priest
Edward Golding	gentleman
Nicholas Everard	gentleman
Lawrence Lomax	gentleman
William Herring	yeoman

Protestants

James Seman	mercier
Robert Shene	draper
Thomas Blow	unknown, but four other members of his immediate family were woollen drapers
Nicholas Knevet	draper
William Mason	husbandman

The only leading individuals not to fit into this pattern were William Thrower and Robert London, both Protestants and both described as yeomen. However, it would seem that, on the whole, the supporters of Protestantism tended to come from one social grouping (this is certainly confirmed by the crafts of the early Protestant heretics) and the Catholics from another.

Nevertheless, such divisions in this small, close-knit community can only be described as tendencies and are not susceptible to an over-confident historical categorisation for the reality at this most local of levels was the reality of personal relationships, whether their nature be one of friendship or enmity. Historical classification can then become meaningless, for who can say if Thomas London's legal action brought against Nicholas Everard over some disputed land arose from doctrinal differences or that Edward Golding's description of Thomas London as 'impudent' and 'malicious' stemmed from a theological bitterness that was spilling over into other areas of life? Could it not just as easily be the reverse, that ancient enmities passed on perhaps through several generations had rather dictated subsequent religious affiliation?

But that very complexity of motivation and behaviour which becomes apparent when discussing individuals can also be used as evidence of a contrary nature and we should not assume that all the Catholics hung together in a separate group from all the Protestants for there were cases (although not many) of friendships which survived the doctrinal differences - the Semans and the Goldings, for example. Anne Seman, whose will displayed Calvinistic sympathies, attended Agnes Golding's wedding and was even godmother to one of the next generation of Goldings.

Even so, the bulk of the evidence does support a very strong sense of division. An analysis of the witnesses and legatees of the wills shows, on the whole, the two groups remaining fairly separate and what emerges most strongly in the documents of sixteenth-century Eye is a bitter factionalism. Eye was a small, insular community bedevilled by internecine strife, by personal and family conflicts that did not pass away with each generation. There was, perhaps, nothing very unusual in that, except that in the divided world of the sixteenth century such strife took on the colours of the wider conflicts and was fanned by the torn loyalties of the age.

In Eye can be seen a microcosm of what was happening all over the country, indeed all over Europe, except that here the drama was played out in the most intimate of surroundings, at the level of the very deepest reality where the protagonists met each other daily in the streets, where actions instantly and often deeply affected their fellow-inhabitants. The rather more theoretical conflicts of all those more famous protagonists in the Reformation chronicle (the theologians, the princes, the papacy) were for the most part untempered by that element of the personal and the immediate and for that reason their ideologies could remain clear-cut, abstract, undefiled.

Those same conflicts played out in daily life in Eye were blurred by the reality and diversity of real people in real relationships, and

it is in this sense that the dramas of the macrocosm seem somehow more authentic in the arena of the microcosm. Authentic, but more diffuse, less tangible, less easily grasped, for here were real people, living out real lives and embodying the great ideas of the sixteenth century not in their intellect only but at every level of their human intercourse and behaviour.

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Appendix (a)Inventory of Eye Priory at its suppression in 1536MONASTERIU DE EYE

An Inventory Indentyd made the xxvth daye of August anno regni Rs Henrici viii^{vi} xxviii^{vo} betwene Sir Anthony Wyngefeld knyght Sir Humfrey Wyngefeld and Sr Thomas Russhe knyghts Richard Southwell esquyre and Thomas Myldemay Comissioners to the kynge or sovrayne lorde one thone partie and William parker Prior ther one thother partie wytnessith that the said Comissioners have delyvered unto the said Prior the daye and yer above wrytten theise parcells of goods herafter specified and declared to be kept to the kyngs use.

In the churche at the high alter and the Qwyer

Fyrst a very olde table of tymber lytell worth
 Itm ii great Candell stycks of latten at
 Itm an old broken setell lytell worth at
 Itm one payer of old organs ner to the Qwyer lytell
 worth at
 Itm vi old boks for ther service nothyng worth
 rem w^t the prior Itm a pyx of lvery garnysshed
 w^t sylver

s d
 xx
 ii ii
 x
 nl

Sm xiii^s x^d pr.

In o^r lady chapell

Itm a lytell table of alabastr lytell worth at

xii

Sm xii^d

In Saint Nicolas Chapell

Itm a lytell table of alabastr lytell worth at

xvi

Sm xvi^d

In the Vestry

Itm one chalesses of sylver guylt p oz xxi oz at
 iii^s iiid^d
 Itm ii other chalesses parcell guylt p oz xxiii oz
 iii^s iiid^d
 Itm a payer of sensers p oz xxi p oz at iii^s iiid^d
 Itm a ship p oz viii oz at iii^s iiid^d the oz
 Itm a lytell crosse of tymber garnysshed w^t
 sylver lytell worth at

lxx

iiii^{li}

lxx

xxvi

viii

xx

Sm xiii^{li} iii^s vi^d

rem cu peggiore

It iiid lytell tables of tymbr
 garnysshed w^t sylver lytell worth at

vi

viii

Itm ii lytel boxes of Crystall garnysshed wt sylver at		xx
Itm iii lytell boxes of sylver wt relyques at	vi	viii
rem cu piore Itm an arme of tymber garnysshed wt		
silver callyd saint Blasis arme at	v	
rem cu piore Itm a lytell piece of tymber wt a		
piece of a rybbe in it at		x
Itm an olde Masse boke callyd the redde boke of Eye		
garnysshed wt a lytell sylver on the one side the		
residewe lytell worth		xx
Itm an old cope of old bare velvet garnysshed wt		
flowers lytell worth at		xx
Itm ii old copes of redd sylk Bawdekyn lytel worth at	xiii	iiii
Itm ii copes of whyte Damaske wt garters of blewe old		
and ner worne at	x	
Itm ii old copes of tawny sylk Bawdekyn lytell worth at	iii	iiii
Itm a vestment wt decon and subdecon of blak velwet		
very old and ner worne at	v	
Itm a vestment wt decon and subdecon of whyte Damaske		
olde at	x	
Itm a vestment wt decon and subdecon of redd sylk		
Bawdekyn old att	vi	viii
Itm a cotydyan vestment wt decon and subdecon of		
grene sylk very old att		xx
Itm a single vestment of whyte Damaske old and lytell		
worth at		xx
Itm a single vestment of grene and blewe sylk		
Bawdekyn at	ii	

Sm lxxvii^s x^d

Itm viii Albys for the Qwyre wt parers of sylk at	v	iiii
Itm ii old alter clothes of Dyaper ner worne at		xii
Itm ii hangginggs of very old blak velwet for the		
high alter worne and very lytell worth at		xii
Itm a paynted alter cloth wt shippes ner worne at		iiii
Itm vi alter clothes of lynen ner worne at	ii	
Itm a crosse of copper very old at		vi

Sm of the vestery Stuff the plat deducted pr lxxv^s vi^d

In the chambr callyd the Quenes chambr

Itm a Seler a testor of Dornyx & old fetherbedde		
a boster and a payer of blanketts at	v	
It an old chest at		ii
It an old cussbyn at		ii

Sm vii^s ii^d

In the paynted chambr

It the chamber hanged wt old redde saye lytell worth		vi
It a fetherbedd very old a bolster a blanket and a		
coverying at	iiii	
It thre curtaynes of saye ner worne at		vi

Sm v^s

In the Inner chambr

It an old fetherbedde a bolster and a coveryng at iii iiii

In the grene chambr

Itm a seler testor iiii curteynes of old grene saye
lytell worth viii

Itm two ffether bedds ii bolster a payre of blanketts
a pillow and ii coverynngs at

Itm an old cheyr at

$$S_m \quad x^s \quad x^d$$

In the pantry

It an old Basen and ewer of pewter at xvi

Sm pr xxxvii^s x^d

Itm v old candell stycks of latten lytell worth at x

r.m.s. Itm a salt wt the cover of sylver p oz
xii oz iiis iiid xl

Itm xii sponys of sylver p oz xiii & oz
iiii^s iiii^d at xliiii iiii

Itm one goblett w^t the cover of sylver
p oz xxii oz iiis iiiid lxxiii iiiii

Itm iiii masa wt bands of sylvr praysed at xiii iiii

Itm ii lytell chafyng dyssshes of latten at viii

In the kechyn

Itm iii Brasse potts at	vi	viii
-------------------------	----	------

It a lytell cawdern of copper at xvi

Itm a ketyll and a brasse panne ner worne at xii

Itm iiii spyttts at iiii

Itm on rostyng jacke iiii

It a payre of potte henggs ii

It a tryvet at 1111

It xvi platters x dysshes xii Sawyers old broken and
lytell better then broken pewter at vi viii

Itm a lytell brasen mortter	xii
-----------------------------	-----

Sm xxiii^s iiii^d

In the Bakhous and Brewe hous

Itm one great leade

Itm a lytell brassen leade

Itm ii great fatts and lytell fatts wt a keler

In the Hall

It an old paynted clothe at the hygh deace ii

It a table and a payer of trestylls and ii formes at xii

Sm xiii^d

In the p(ar)lor

It the same hanged w^t old grene saye at viii

It a table a peyer of trestylls and ii formes wt on
old carpet of bungey work at pr

Sm ix^{li} xviii^s

It vi old cussyhyns
It iii old cheyers

ii

vi

Sm iii^s vi^dNapry

It ii old table clothes of Dyaper at
It iii old table clothes playne at
Itm vi playne napkyns
Itm iii towells lytell worth
Itm vi payer of old shets

xx

xvi

xii

vi

vi

Sm x^sCatall

It x kyne and a Bull
It ix old horsse for the Cartte and plough
It x swyne at

lxxiii

iiii

xl

xiii

iiii

Sm vi^{li} xix^s viii^dSm to^{ls} xxxv^{li} xvii^s x^d

per me Willm parker piorem

Itm the Corne growyne open the demaynes this yere
preysed at x^{li}

Sm to^{ls} hujus Inventory cu grano pr xlv^{li} xvii^s x^d

Appendix (b)Eye wills from 1387 to 1601Abbreviations

NCC	Norwich Consistory Court
PCC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
Bury	Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds
Ipswich	Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich

1387	-	NCC	91 Harsyk
1397	Richard de Framesden	NCC	242 Harsyk
1408	Robert Well	NCC	341 Harsyk
1421	Roger Dampport	Bury	Baldwyne 79
1439	John Andrew	Bury	Baldwyne 10
1441	Robert Barker	Bury	Baldwyne 19
1442	John Salter	NCC	198 Doke
1445	Agnes Whytbred	Bury	Baldwyne 65
1446	Baldwin Cratyng	NCC	126 Wylbey
1447	William Golofre	Bury	Baldwyne 75
1448	John Jenewes	Bury	Baldwyne 133
1448	Robert Mason	Bury	Baldwyne 95
1449	Anabelle Wastell	NCC	45 Aleyn
1451	Clemens Saxsi	Bury	Baldwyne 133
1451	Andrew Roger alias Wever	Bury	Baldwyne 103
1451	Richard Cullyng	Bury	Baldwyne 106
1453	John Grey	NCC	191 Aleyn
1455	William Crystofer	NCC	2 Neve
1456	John Folkys	NCC	12 Neve
1456	John Dun	NCC	75 Neve
1457	Robert Trust	NCC	70 Brosyard
1459	John Langlond	Bury	Baldwyne 264
1460	John Goldyng	NCC	6 Betyns
1461	Emma Garerde	NCC	93 Betyns
c1462	Walter Page	Bury	Baldwyne 362
1462	John Pope	Bury	Baldwyne 376
1462	John Glovere	NCC	110 Betyns
1463	William Goldyng	Bury	Baldwyne 308b
1463	Agnes Jenews	Bury	Baldwyne 338
1465	Margaret Folks	Bury	Baldwyne 387
1467	John Arnald	NCC	131 Betyns
1469	John Nase	NCC	112 Betyns
1469	John Watyr	Bury	Baldwyne 451
1469	Robert Turnour	Bury	Baldwyne 436
1469	John Carwent	Bury	Baldwyne 431
c1470	Thomas Garlyng	Bury	Baldwyne 431
1470	Robert Hardyng	Bury	Baldwyne 457
1473	John Yestas	Bury	Hervye 97
1473	William Hubert	NCC	1 Hubert
1474	Joan Wroo	Bury	Hervye 97
1475	Robert Estgate	Bury	Hervye 110
1475	William Seman	Bury	Hervye 43
1476	Richard Godfrey	NCC	143 Gelour
1477	William Cakymoll	Bury	Hervye 171
1479	Robert Havel	NCC	39 A.Caston
1479	Robert Anyell	Ipswich	EE2/E/3, ff 12-14

1482	Agnes Mason	Bury	Hervye 384
1484	Nicholas Hardyng	NCC	262 A.Caston
1487	John Cullyng	Bury	Hervye 376
1488	John Fiske	NCC	51 Typpes
		also Ipswich	EE2/M4/1/3(18)
		also Ipswich	EE2/E/3 f2
1489	John Ketylberewe	Bury	Boner 3
1490	Roger Fuller	Bury	Boner 111
1490	Rose Fuller	NCC	27 Typpes
1490	Agnes Mason	NCC	63 Typpes
1491	Joan Smith	Bury	Boner 75
1492	Jaques Blondell	PCC	11 Horne
		also NCC	134 Typpes
1493	Nicholas Knyght	NCC	139 Typpes
1495	Joan Goddes	NCC	99 Typpes
1496	Richard Punchard	NCC	120 Typpes
1500	John Mason	NCC	99 Wight
1501	John Porter	NCC	59 Popy
1504	John Blythe	Bury	Fuller 42
1504	Thomas Potell	NCC	66 Garnon
1504	John Stanfeld	Bury	Fuller 35
1504	Johan Busby	NCC	16 Garnon
1506	William Gale	PCC	8 Bennett
1510	John Kempnam	NCC	96 Johnson
1514	Thomas Eyir	PCC	8 Holder
1516	William Seman	NCC	231 Brigges
1521	Robert Praty	Bury	Johnson 52
1522	Robert Kendale	Ipswich	EE2/E/3 f10
1525	Thomas Skutt	NCC	88 Attmere
1529	Symonde Seman	NCC	106 Attmere
1529	John Mason	Bury	Brett 1
1530	William Ryppes	Bury	Longe 58
1530	Simon Torold	NCC	160 Attmere
1531	William Bronde	NCC	169 Attmere
1531	Robert Thrower	Bury	Longe 84
		also Bury	Poope 106
1533/4	Thomas Parmenter	NCC	37 Godsalue
1533	Thomas Wace	PCC	12 Crumwell
1534	John Rosere	NCC	225 Attmere
1534	John Wodwarde	NCC	249 Attmere
1536	Richard Hardye	Bury	Poope 104
1538	Denyse Lowe	Bury	Poope 67
1539	Roger Veer	Bury	Poope 204
1539	John Golding	NCC	377 Attmere
1540	Joan Smyth	Bury	Poope 278
		also Bury	Longe 608
1540	Margaret Veer	Bury	Poope 276
1540	Ellen Wasse	Bury	Colman 108
1540	Joan Mason	Bury	Poope 257
1540	John Permeter	Bury	Colman 59
1540	Thomas Mason	NCC	139 Cooke
1540	Thomas Makyn	Bury	Longe 589
1541	Thomas Roser	NCC	184 Cooke
1541	William Fen	Bury	Colman 114
1541	Robert Knyghts	Bury	Colman 60
1541	Richard Feeld	Bury	Colman 103
1541	Robert Sowgate	NCC	341 Attmere
1542	Robert Byrche	Ipswich	Wills, Vol.15 f183
1547	John Hayward	Bury	Coole 399

1547	William Chychlye	Bury	Coole 402
c1548	Johan Jonson	Bury	Buxston 28
1549	Rychard Stannard	Bury	Coole 562
1549	John Medowe	Bury	Coole 507
1550	Robert Barker	Bury	Wood 56
1551	William Kettleburgh	Bury	Buxston 26
		also Ipswich	EE2/B/10/3(f) 34
1552	George Hamond	Bury	More 96
1552	John Manestrye	Bury	Markes 69
1554	Henry Pettawe	Bury	Markes 125
1554	Robert Busby	Bury	Markes 209
1555	Catheryn Smithe	Bury	Markes 208
1555	Augustyne Seman	Bury	Dooe 31
c1555	William Knappe	Bury	More 123
1556	William Fanner	Bury	Bell 417
1556	James Seman	Bury	Dooe 117
1556/7	Lewes Harvy	Bury	Dooe 29
1557	Christian Golding	Bury	Bell 290
1557	Richard Fermor	Bury	Paynter 128
1557	Thomas Barker	Bury	Bell 90
1557	Edmund Roberts	Bury	Bell 338
1557	Julyan Barker	Bury	Dooe 241
1557	John Cossye	Bury	Dooe 280
1558	Margaret Making	NCC	348 Knightes
1558	William Woodman alias Webbe	Bury	Sparrowe 229
		also Ipswich	EE2/B/10/3(e)
1558	John Fanner	Bury	Paynter 97
1558	John Smyth	Bury	Bell 334
1558	Robert Lockwode	Bury	Bell 461
1558	Grace Roberdes	Bury	Sparrowe 328
1558	Johann London	Bury	Sparrowe 6
1558	John Byker	Bury	Sparrowe 330
1558	James Barker	Bury	Sparrowe 396
1558	Nicholas Rayner	Bury	Bell 363
1558/9	Anne Knappe	Bury	Bell 577
1559	Anne Seman	Bury	Baker 4
c1559	Peter Branchen	Bury	Paynter 123
1559	John Kinge	Bury	Sparrowe 377
1559/60	Antonye Gissinge	Bury	Sparrowe 392
1560	Richard Thurkettle	Bury	Arnold 204
1561	Thomas Jenor	NCC	70 Cowlles
1562	Barbara Waren	Bury	Arnold 38
1562	Katherine Webbe	Bury	Wood B69
		also NCC	246 Moyse alias Spicer
1563	John Whetingham	Bury	Arnold 56
1563	Edward Turrolde	Bury	Arnold 46
c1564	Thomas Colbye	Bury	Arnold 104
1565/6	Humfrey Knevet	Bury	Arnold 303
1567	Johane Scrooke	Bury	Arnold 380
1567	Robert Shene	Bury	Reade 76
c1567	Margerie Folcarde	NCC	284 Folklin
1567	Thomas Nele	Bury	Reade 81
1568	Catheren Smyeth	Bury	Reade 6
1569	Anne Bettes	NCC	162 Ponder
1569	William Heringe	PCC	34 Lyon
1571	William Clarke	Bury	Wroo 424
1572	Johanne Thrower	NCC	127 Fairchilde
1574	John Lavenhame	Bury	Wroo 371
1575	William Mason	NCC	91 Parker

1577	Anne Ellinger alias Barker	NCC	430 Woodstocke
1578	Agnes Gessoppe	Bury	Browne 19
1581	John Palle	NCC	338 Bate
1581	Johane Lomax	Bury	Browne 358
1582	William Flegge	Bury	Browne 394
1582	Richarde Fulcher	NCC	222 Homes
1582	Charles Cutler	PCC	23 Tirwhite
1582	Thomas Prattie	Bury	Frende 15
1584	Henrye Walman	Bury	Frende 147
1585	Raphe Baldwin	Bury	Bright 1
1586	Thomas Harvie	Bury	Bright 80
1587	Richard Stannard	NCC	94 Homes
1588	Cecylie Wallman	Bury	Goddarde 155
1589	William Neale	NCC	147 Flack
1589	William Hunte	NCC	298 Flack
1589	Nicholas Palle	NCC	268 Flack
1591	Maryon Flegge	Bury	Bacon 29
1591/2	George Johnson	Bury	Bacon 194
1593	Richard Lanham	NCC	126 Cleake
1593	Frauncys Kent	Ipswich	EE2/M1/3/1
		also Ipswich	EE2/M1/3/12
c1594	William Bytteringe	Bury	Blomfield 355
1594	Margerie Rogers	NCC	14 Hinde
c1595	James Mawlinge	Bury	Blomfield 55
c1596	John Roberts	Bury	Blomfield 158
1598/9	Robert Harding	NCC	4 Candler
1599	William Burman	Bury	Whitney 217
1600	Thomas Neale	NCC	9 Force
1601	John Davye	NCC	189 Gardyner

Appendix (c)Eye wills: social status of testators (where mentioned)

1446	chaplain	1591	cook
1457	chaplain	1593	tailor
1467	chaplain	1593	gentleman
1484	yeoman	1596	yeoman
1500	butcher	1594	gentleman
1501	priest	1598	yeoman
1506	priest	1599	mason
1510	servant	1600	yeoman
1525	hermit	1601	yeoman
1530	yeoman		
1531	monk		
1533	yeoman		
1534	shopkeeper		
1540	husbandman		
1541	tanner		
1541	tanner		
1547	yeoman		
1549	husbandman		
1550	tailor		
1552	weaver		
1555	shopkeeper		
1556	mercier		
1556	haberdasher		
1557	unmarried		
1558	servant		
1558	shopkeeper		
1558	shopkeeper		
1558	singleman		
1559	shopkeeper		
1559	shopkeeper		
1560	priest		
1563	yeoman		
1564	shopkeeper (?tanner)		
1565	shopkeeper		
1567	clothier and draper		
1569	yeoman		
1575	husbandman		
1577	singlewoman		
1581	husbandman		
1581	singlewoman		
1582	barber		
1582	millwright		
1582	esquire		
1584	mason		
1586	mercier		
1587	yeoman		
1589	baker		
1589	yeoman		
1589	cooper		

Appendix (d)Occupations and office-holding in Eye

In the Eye records of the sixteenth century, the social status or occupation is known of 123 individuals. They can be classified as follows:

Yeomen	16	Shoemakers	2
Tailors	13	Limeburner	1
Gentlemen	11	Linen-weaver	1
Husbandmen	9	Glazier	1
Esquires	7	Sadler	1
Drapers	7	Nailman	1
Stall-holders	6	Wheelwright	1
Glovers	5	Miller	1
Weavers	4	Hosier	1
Thatchers	4	Butcher	1
Victuallers	3	Cooper	1
Mercers	3	Millwright	1
Carpenters	3	Cordwainer	1
Smiths	3	Barber	1
Bakers	3	Wright	1
Tanners	3	Farmer	1
Masons	2	Labourer	1
Brewers	2	Cook	1

(The number of individuals whose occupations related to the cloth industry was 34.)

36 men (whose occupations or social status are known) held office as bailiff, chamberlain, churchwarden or constable:

yeomen	11
gentlemen	8
drapers	5
husbandmen	3
tailors	3
weavers	3
cordwainer	1
farmer	1
tanner	1
mercier	1
wright	1
victualler	1

Appendix (e)The Eye Oligarchy

Eye was dominated by certain families who were influential in town affairs and whose authority was largely expressed through the various borough offices. Below are examples of just some of those families with details of known offices held. Where religious affiliation is reasonably certain, this is indicated with (P) or (C) for Protestant or Catholic. Details of occupation and wills are also given where appropriate.

BARKER

	Anthony		councilman
	Edward		councilman
	Robert	tailor	bailiff; chamberlain; burgess (Will 1550)
(C)	Thomas		churchwarden (twice) (Will 1557)

BLOW

(P)	Thomas		bailiff; churchwarden; chamberlain; councilman
	William	draper	bailiff; principal burgess
(P)	John	draper	bailiff

FANNER

	John		bailiff (twice); chamberlain
	Robert		chamberlain
(C)	William		chamberlain (Will 1556)

(Office-holding in this family can be traced from 1452 to 1548)

GOLDING

(C)	Edward		(15C) bailiff
(C)	John	glover	(15C) bailiff (twice) (Will 1460)
(C)	John		bailiff (three times); burgess (Will 1539)
(C)	Edward	gent	churchwarden; principal burgess
	Robert	lawyer	recorder

(Office-holding in this family can be traced from 1452 to 1569)

KNEVET

(P)	Humphrey		bailiff (twice); chamberlain; churchwarden
(P)	Nicholas		bailiff (four times); chamberlain; churchwarden (twice); principal burgess
	Humphrey		bailiff (twice); churchwarden (twice)

LONDON

	Richard		chamberlain (twice)
(P)	Robert	yeoman	bailiff (five times); churchwarden; councilman
(P)	Thomas		bailiff (twice); chamberlain; churchwarden; collector for the poor

MALLOWES

	John		councilman	
(C)	Thomas		bailiff; churchwarden; chamberlain	
	Thomas		bailiff (four times)	

MASON

(C)	Thomas		bailiff (three times); churchwarden; burgess	(Will 1540)
(P)	William	husbandman	churchwarden; councilman	(Will 1575)
	Robert		constable	

PRATY

	Thomas		chamberlain (twice)	(Will 1582)
	Edmund	gent	bailiff	
	Edward	gent	bailiff (twice)	

SEMAN

	William		bailiff; chamberlain (twice); constable	(Will 1516)
(C)	Simon	shopkeeper	bailiff; chamberlain	(Will 1529)
(P)	James	mercier	churchwarden; chamberlain	(Will 1556)
(C)	Augustine	shopkeeper	churchwarden	(Will 1555)
	William		chamberlain	

(Office-holding in this family can be traced from 1468 to 1549)

SHENE

	Nicholas		constable; churchwarden	
	John		chamberlain	
(P)	Robert	draper	churchwarden; chamberlain	(Will 1567)
	Robert	gent	bailiff (seven times); churchwarden (three times); principal burgess; overseer of poor	

(Office-holding in this family can be traced from 1519 to 1608)

THROWER

(P)	William	yeoman	bailiff (three times); churchwarden (twice)	
	John	?farmer	bailiff (four times); principal burgess; overseer of poor	
	Richard		bailiff; churchwarden; collector for poor	
	Thomas		churchwarden	

TOROLD

(P)	Edward	yeoman	churchwarden (twice)	(Will 1563)
	William		bailiff (twice)	

WHETINGHAM

	Robert		bailiff	
(P)	John		bailiff (four times); churchwarden; councilman	(Will 1563)

Three bailiffs are known to have been illiterate in the sixteenth century: William Blow, a draper, Robert Hardyng, yeoman, and Thomas Mallows.

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